

The Richmond Claddagh

Newsletter of the Greater Richmond Irish American Society
www.RichmondIAS.org



May, 2006

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thursday – May 18th 7pm Kate Brogan – Featured Speaker on Scotch/Irish Gaelic	May IAS General Membership meeting - more info in this newsletter - Dumbarton Library, 6800 Staples Mill Road Richmond, VA 23228 804-262-6507 – for directions to the library
Saturday – May 20th	Debra Cowan sings (see story below).
Saturday – May 20th	The Hanover Heritage Festival - Hanover Courthouse, VA
Sunday, June 11th	IAS Annual Picnic – The Burke Farm – Amelia Virginia. More information & directions in this newsletter.
Friday, June 16th - Bloomsday Festival All Day	Watch the newsletter for more information on this first Richmond Bloomsday Festival to honor author James Joyce. Call organizer Hutch Hutchinson at 673-0867 for more information or to volunteer for the festival or visit the website www.bloomsdayrichmond.com
June 17th & 18th	Potomac Celtic Festival – Ireland is the Honored Nation. More information in this newsletter and at the website www.potomaccelticfest.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, IAS Members, our year is winding down, but it is just beginning. We have elections for board members. Vote! It makes a difference! I have listened to your ideas and passed them on to the board members and officers. This is your organization, so the membership must decide on some of these issues. (We have 129 members!) I have challenged the officers and board to come up with ideas and this is now extended to the total membership. So put on your thinking caps this summer. And I expect to see you at these events. Like a great poet said, “I hear you, but I don’t see you; so I don’t know you.”

Finally, those of us who attended Strawberry Hill had a great time. Gratefully, no horses were seriously injured. A climate-controlled skybox is the way to go. We’d like to do it again next year.

At your service,
Chris Garrett

The (World Famous) IAS Annual Summer Picnic! Sunday, June 11, starting at 1 pm at the home of Pat and Helen Burke. It’s a beautiful drive out to nearby Amelia County. This event is **free** to active members. Guests are \$5 each.

You must **RSVP to Gloria Cahen 233-2113 by June 1**. Main dishes will be provided, but you are asked to bring a side dish to share. BYOB.

Driving Directions: Go west on Rt. 360 (Hull St. Road). 5 miles past the Appomattox River (which separates Chesterfield & Amelia Counties), turn left at Route 627 (Cheathams Rd.). As you make the “S” shaped turn, you’ll see a Virginia Home Center store on the opposite side of Rt. 360: go eight-tenths of a mile on Cheathams Road, & turn left onto an uphill gravel driveway. Mailbox has 9943 on it. (If you drive past the Citgo state on 360, then turn around because you’ve gone too far!). Lost? Call 561-5778.

May 20th - Debra Cowan sings Traditional Ballads of Britain, Ireland and America

Performing a blend of traditional folk songs from England, Scotland, Ireland and North America, Debra's vocal performances leave her audiences feeling that they have just taken part in something special. She presents her slow songs and ballads with emotive and well-focused vocals that are often compared to Joan Baez, Maddy Prior, and June Tabor. Her up-beat material inspires people to sing along and tap their feet. She is a warm, witty performer who has been described as "one of the best voices in the business". Well known to folk audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, Deb tours extensively in both the United States and the UK.

Come and check out our new, larger venue. The seating is comfortable and the acoustics are superb! We've got some wonderful concerts lined up over the coming months, including **Bob Zentz** from Virginia Beach who will perform "Songs of the Sea" (June 17) and, on July 15th the band **Southern Horizon**, comprised of John Robison, Sue Tarr (of Tinker's Damn), Victoria Hamrick and Robbie Watts.

Presented by Richmond Folk Music. Tickets \$10.00 in advance, \$12.00 at the door. Call 804.647.7856 or visit www.richmondfolkmusic.org . Held at The Middle School Auditorium of St. Christopher's School, 711 St. Christopher Road, Richmond, VA. 8:00 pm, May 20.

The MAY IAS MEETING will be at the Dumbarton Library. The featured speaker will be Kate Brogan discussing Scottish Gaelic. Kate will talk about the differences between Scottish and Irish Gaelic, and give a little history connecting the two forms of Gaelic. Kate has a school that teaches Scottish Gaelic. For more information on the program - please call Dan Begley at 740-5631.

HANOVER HERITAGE DAY - This is a fun event the IAS has participated in for a couple of years now. Our participation gives us a chance to let people know about our organization and maybe we can attract some new members and to support the activities of our neighboring county to the North. The festival recognizes the significant historical sites, events and periods that represent the people, the cultures, tradition and spirit of Hanover County. Nearly 50 organizations will exhibit, rain or shine. There will be new exhibits, entertainment and numerous children's activities. The festival is at the Hanover Courthouse Route 301, 23069. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (804) 365-6005. Free Admission. <http://www.co.hanover.va.us/pio/heritage/heritage.htm>.

If you are interested in volunteering to work in the IAS tent for a couple of hours - please call Gloria Cahen at 233-2113. It's very easy work, and lots of people will be there to help you learn what we do to help people learn more about their Irish heritage and about the IAS

June 17 & 18: Potomac Celtic Festival is held at Morven Park Equestrian Center, 41793 Tutt Lane, Leesburg, VA 20176. **The featured nation this year is Ireland.** More information on the festival, entertainment schedules and area hotels can be found at the website

www.potomaccelticfest.org.

Entertainment includes the following - mostly Irish guests - Chulrua, Coyote Run (from Williamsburg, VA), Graidia, Matt & Shannon Heaton with Laura Cortese, Iona, Le Vent du Nord ("North Wind) with step dancer, Tommy Sands from County Down, Tinsmith - and others listed artists - including Beggars Circus, Blue Ridge Irish Music School, Loudoun Border Guard, Mac-Talla, Maggie's Music, Moch Pryderi, Lily Neill, and Trasna.

Hmmmm... Is anyone up for a road trip?!?!?

THE MEMBERSHIP CORNER

The IAS always welcomes new members, and so we extend a warm welcome to:

James, Jim & JT Dacey
Mili & Joseph Hollenbeck
James & Kathleen Petty
Gina Venn

These new additions bring our IAS membership to a total of **130** members! Don't forget to check the mailing label on this newsletter - the date displayed shows your membership renewal date. If your membership is due and you haven't received your renewal notice please call Nancy Emig at 323-6415 and you'll get a new form in the mail. Or go to our website - www.richmondias.org - print off the membership form and send it to the address displayed.

If you need to contact Your IAS Officers:

President/Chris Garrett – 272-1971
Vice President/Dan Begley 740-5631
Secretary/Gloria Cahen- 233-2113
Treasurer/Colleen Callahan 261-4998

DID YOU KNOW?

Ireland contains more bog land, relatively speaking, than any country in Europe, except Finland. For people in rural areas, turf cut from the bog is still a natural source of heat. Turf cutting begins in spring and then the turf is spread and rickled . Rickled means to pile the turf up in small mounds. By summer, the turf is dry and it's time to bring it home. Everything has to be prepared before the winter comes, or even earlier, because the rain would wet the turf too much. It has to be dry and in the shed before Autumn. Then and only then, can an Irish country family look forward to the cozy warmth of "a turf fire in the cabin."

ADVERTISE IN THE IAS CLADDAGH

Do you own your own Business? Want to Advertise your Company?

The IAS would love to have you advertise in our monthly newsletter. The cost - **\$25 a year for a business card size ad.**

We can also do personal ads for events like yard sales or individuals selling an item. Cost will be **\$5 per newsletter.** Please contact Linda Mayers for details:

Linda Mayers
1537 Hardwood Terrace
Midlothian, VA. 23114
804-379-5577
Ehm1537@msn.com

WANTED!!!!!!

We are looking for your very best Irish Recipes. What we are looking to do is compile a booklet that we can sell at all the different events we do. So put your thinking caps on. Look for Grandma's favorite dishes. What do you make that is totally Irish? Forward them to Linda Mayers. Her address is above.

Instructions of King Cormac, King of Cashel

Be not too wise, nor too foolish
Be not too conceited, nor diffident
Be not too haughty, nor too humble
Be not too talkative, nor too silent
Be not too hard, nor too feeble.

If you be too wise, men will expect too much of you
If you be too foolish, you will be deceived
If you be conceited, you will be thought difficult
If you be too humble, you will be without honour
If you be too talkative, you will not be heeded
If you be silent, you will not be regarded
If you be too hard, you will be broken
If you be too feeble, you will be crushed.

**Book Review by Joe McMenamin:
Paddy's Lament**

Thomas Gallagher

Harcourt Brace & Co., 1982

"The troubles" did not begin in the 1970s. Ireland has had "trouble" with England for more than 800 years. At no point in that long, sorry history, however, was the trouble greater than it was in the middle of the 19th Century. And at no point since have the Brits adequately acknowledged, much less attempted to compensate for, their cheerfully genocidal, coldly calculating response to that wholly unnecessary, savagely vicious attack on the native Irish that we know today as the Great Hunger. Thomas Gallagher's thesis in *Paddy's Lament* is that the bitter hatred between Celt and Saxon, while of multifactorial etiology, owes much of its intensity to England's response to the potato blight. He makes a good case.

There are of course many books addressing this topic. In *Lament*, Gallagher limits himself to 1846 and infamous Black '47, even though the potatoes rotted in 1845 and the crop remained blighted for years. He describes the plants turning black before the eyes of the croppies, the horrid stench of putrefaction, the unconscionable "tumbling" of cottages, the horrors of the workhouses, the grim alternative of death in roadside ditches, the landlords' cutthroat pursuit of depopulating the countryside, the miseries of the coffin ships, and the callous frauds perpetrated upon the greenhorns when the survivors finally crawled through the Golden Door. While Gallagher makes a good deal of information accessible in this relatively slender volume, his treatment of some topics is a bit dissatisfying. In *The Workhouses of Ireland*, John O'Connor describes much more vividly than Gallagher does the green-mouthed, cadaverous hulks who perished in anonymity after they had been reduced to eating grass. The American Wake, conducted by grieving parents on the eves of their children's emigration, is more memorably portrayed in Kerby Miller's *Emigrants and Exiles*. The single most riveting feature of *Lament*, though, and what distinguishes it from many other works, is Gallagher's terrifyingly graphic description of the infections that complicated starvation in the old country and sharply increased its mortality. Typhus, dysentery, and cholera mowed down as

many debilitated micks as starvation itself. Gallagher brings us not only the sight and smell of death among the famished, but the very feel of the attacking lice, leaping from new corpse to fresh victim, joining husband with wife, mother with child, brother with sister in a world, one hopes, less inhumane than that created by the British landlords here on earth. The powerful pictures Gallagher paints of these horrific scenes fascinate and repel, searing our memories with scenes at once both too ghastly to contemplate and too bestial to forget.

Yet there is a sort of trade-off in *Paddy's Lament*. Gallagher invents fictitious characters whose brief, self-conscious role is to illustrate historical events. These characters make passing appearances but linger neither on the page nor in our memories. One senses that their job is limited: to put a human face on the facts. That job they succeed in doing, but they do not seize us by the emotional collar the way, say, Conor Larkin does in *Trinity*. In a similar spirit, Gallagher spares us the reams of dreary data that others have compiled. He even treats the British with relative generosity. Gallagher makes clear that from the British point of view, clearing the countryside of the natives' hovels was a rational approach to improving the environment for pasturing sheep, whose wool would bring higher profits by far than the crops tended by the native Taigs. But Gallagher does not tell us about the soupers, for example, the desperate Catholics who could slurp a few spoonfuls of wretched soup only at the price of renouncing the Faith and professing Protestantism, nor of Queen Victoria's shameful visit, at the height of the Hunger, when amidst festivities organized in her honor she neither saw nor inquired about the mass graves of uncounted thousands of her subjects.

Gallagher's balanced treatment provides a fine introduction for the general reader to the enormities of British hubris in this period, and the consequences they have had for generations until this very day. For the scholar, *Lament* might be a bit superficial. For the Hard Men of the IRA, a bit too genteel. For the newby, however, Gallagher's work provides a useful introduction to a complex topic, with probably just the right mix of historical recitation and righteous indignation.