



# The Cairde Connection

*"Keeping the Irish Arts Alive!"*

Irish Cultural Center at  
Elms College

Volume 12 & Issue 4

March 2012

## Family fun offered in an Irish Ceili with music

The Irish Cultural Center invites one and all to join in the fun at the Sons of Erin in Westfield for our ceili on Sunday, March 11 at 2 p.m. We will have ceili dancing with local musicians providing the music. We will serve Irish tea and breads and have a 50/50 raffle. We especially invite families with children to attend this free event.

Leo Doherty and his musicians will play the jigs and reels. Dance instructors Mary Ellen O'Brien and Kelly O'Sullivan will demonstrate and direct participants in the steps. In addition, the McDermott Academy of Irish Dance will give a dance demonstration.

If you have never attended a ceili we provide here a little history for you. In modern usage, a ceili is a traditional Gaelic social gathering, which usually involves playing Gaelic folk music and dancing. It originated in Ireland, but is now common throughout the Irish and Scottish Diasporas. Before discos and night-clubs became popular, there were ceilis in most town and village halls on Friday or Saturday nights; they are still common today.

The music is cheerful and lively, and the basic steps can be learned easily; a short instructional session is often provided for new dancers before the start of the dance itself.



Participants in 2011 learn the dance steps at the Ceili.

## Titanic presentation

On April 11, 2012, 7 p.m. in the Alumnae Library Theater we will offer a presentation on the one hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic, the ship designed and built in Belfast by Irishmen. The program will include the showing of a documentary film after a short introduction and offer opportunities for questions and discussion at the end.

On its maiden voyage, the ship, declared to be unsinkable, rammed into an ice-berg on their fourth day of travel and less than three hours later sank on April 15, 1912.

1,517 of the 2,223 passengers died in the tragedy. Seventy-nine of the Irish-born travelers died in the tragedy, as well as many Irish-Americans returning after a visit to Ireland.

The event is free and open to the public but we will accept donations.

## Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to Martha McNamara on the loss of her husband Thomas.

## Join the ICC in the St. Patrick's Parade!

We are looking for marchers to join us in the Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade on Sunday, March 18, to honor the patron saint of Ireland. We are excited to unveil a brand new float this year, with a design that celebrates the "ties that bind us" to our Irish heritage: arts, language, travel and culture. We invite you to join us and walk proudly behind the Irish Cultural Center banner. We need your help to make the Irish Cultural Center a big part of this year's parade. Let's come together as a community and show that our appreciation for Irish culture is still going strong! Marching in the parade is a great event for families and friends. The parade is a 2.9 mile walk through Holyoke. We will meet at the K-Mart parking lot on Route 5, Northampton Street, in Holyoke, the morning of

March 18. The parade will start at the parking lot just before noon, and end at Holyoke City Hall. Marchers should arrange for transportation at the end of the parade. We will be wearing our Irish sweaters or green jackets, with dark trousers. This year's parade promises to be another outstanding event. The Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade is the second largest in the country, with 200,000 onlookers regularly lining the parade route, and a total audience of 400,000. Learn more at [www.holyokestpatricksparade.com](http://www.holyokestpatricksparade.com). Please let us know if you will be marching with the ICC by sending a RSVP to [irishcenter@elms.edu](mailto:irishcenter@elms.edu) or call (413) 265-2537 by March 9. More detailed information on meeting time, etc. will follow as we organize for this yearly event to honor St. Patrick.

The Irish Cultural Center strives to “keep the Irish arts alive.”

The Irish Cultural Center...

- Serves as a public forum for events, including lectures, musical presentations, films and exhibits
- Promotes ties between the Center and educational organizations in Ireland, especially with the Blasket Cultural Center
- Serves as an academic link with Irish American social organizations in Western New England.

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## St. Brigid celebrated with cross making

Padraic Deiseach and Julia Campbell guided the 35 participants in the making of a St. Brigid's cross from chair caning material on January 31. With images on an overhead projected on the screen, they followed directions and, at the end of the evening, left happily clutching a cross that they would place over the door to protect their home from fire and other dangers.

Two who attended, Carolyn Sullivan Peciak and Lauralee Martin, made the trip from Brattleboro, Vermont. They came to learn, not just for themselves, but also to help them in a project of making multiple crosses to sell as a fundraiser for St. Brigid's Kitchen in



Brattleboro.

The Kitchen is a ministry of St. Michael Catholic Church with the support of the parishioners, the people and businesses of the area community and the support of many other faith communities.

A crew from Catholic Communications taped the event and interviewed several attendees with the date of airing planned for WWLP TV Channel 22 on Saturday, March 17 at 7:00 p.m..

## Films attract capacity audiences

Both ICC members and those of the wider community attended the twelfth annual film series. Among those attending the first film “Secret of Kells” were several families with children. Elms professor Jason Murphy gave an introduction, as well as taking questions and making comments after the showing of the film.

Those who attended the second film “Rat” found much to laugh at during the viewing. The following week, “Playboys” attracted a large audience as well.

We completed our film series in mid-February with the showing of

our first full-length feature in Irish with English subtitles, attended by language enthusiasts, as well as those who have not studied the language. Padraic Deiseach gave an introduction, helping viewers to set the scene.

The evaluations completed by 40 % of those in attendance gave the film high marks, for giving enjoyment as well as being educational.

In its portrayal of a western Ireland rural community, namely Connemara, we learned of marriage customs, death and burial rituals, as well as inheritance laws.

Save the dates for next year's films.

## Befriend us on Facebook!

The Irish Cultural Center's official Facebook page is going strong.

Stay up to date with all the happenings at the ICC, with upcoming events, news, information with local and cultural ties and some fun surprises. Help us make this an active community with participation from our members and friends - just visit our page and click "like".

Then spread the word to your friends! You don't need to be a member of the ICC to join our Facebook page. Please visit:

[www.facebook.com/IrishCulturalCenter](http://www.facebook.com/IrishCulturalCenter)

## Captivated by a magical Island by Mary Ellen Lowney

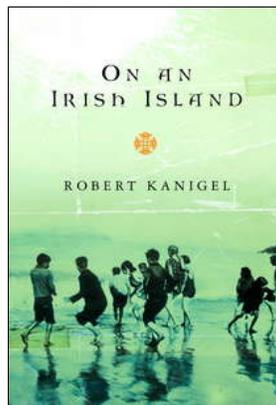
Robert Kanigel didn't set out to write a book on the Great Blasket Island when he paid a visit six years ago. But his honeymoon trip to the rocky West Kerry outpost nearly 3,000 miles to the east of his home in Massachusetts enchanted him, planting the seeds in his mind to put his thoughts in writing.

The fruits of his inspiration are the recently published 'On an Irish Island,' a biographical study of a small group of 20th-century intellectuals who made the Great Blasket Island their second home, and whose love of the insular culture helped to save it from extinction.

Kanigel, a retired science writer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was a recent guest at the Odyssey Bookshop in South Hadley, where his talk on the book drew a crowd of about 50 guests, many of them ICC members, and some of them descendants of the island off the coast of West Kerry.

"I took some time to learn about the way people lived their lives on the island, and I hope this book shows this. It's a wonderful place, fascinating," he said.

Kanigel acknowledged the insider status of many who came to hear his talk and buy the hardcover book. "You know the land, most of you. All I can say is, I did my best," he said. "Those of us who have been there, who know the island, love it."



Once smitten, Kanigel returned three more times to the island, learning the paths and cliffs and doing much of his research at the Great Blasket Centre in Dunquin.

The book paints a detailed picture of the geography of the island and its inhabitants, mostly at the turn of the 19th century and into the early 1900s, when the population was already dwindling. The island went from a peak of about 200 people in the late 1800s to the two dozen who made the final evacuation in 1953.

Kanigel focused on four European intellectuals who visited the Blasket frequently, coming to love the flora, fauna and more than anything, the gentle people whose native Irish tongue was as pure as anything one would find in the country where English was the official language and Irish was nearly obliterated.

The book documents visits made by classicist George Thompson, British museum curator Robin Flower, and linguists Carl Marstrand and Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, four people who found their lives changed by their contact with the island.

At the Odyssey, visitors gave information about the island, as told by ancestors who were born and raised there. "They loved literature," said Kathleen Arduini of Southwick,

whose grandmother, Nellie Jerry O'Shea O'Cearna, was an islander. Arduini's cousin, Sean Cahillane, was interviewed for the book and said he enjoyed the presentation. When Kanigel was researching the book in 2010, Cahillane brought him around the area to visit spots where islanders had emigrated. "He was very well versed in the history of the Dunquin and Great Blasket Island area. I think he's a very strong and powerful writer," said Cahillane, of Springfield.

'On an Irish Island' includes the story of Sister Mary Clemens, a sister of Cahillane and Arduini's grandmother who was a Sister of Providence, living her life at the Providence Mother House in West Springfield. She worked at Brightside in West Springfield and St. Luke's Home for the Aged in Springfield.

Kanigel is the author of six other books, and has received several awards for his writing, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Grady-Stack Award for science writing. His work has appeared in many publications, including the New York Times Magazine, the New York Times Book Review, Harvard Magazine and Psychology Today.

### Member dues

We thank you, one and all, who have sent in dues payments for 2012. Because of your generosity (some with an additional generous donation), we are able to offer some of our programs free or at a reduced rate.

We offer thanks to our patrons: Kathy Gallivan, James and Jean Kane, Timothy O'Shea, Cynthia Prior, Kathleen Riordan, Edward Sullivan, and one member who wishes to remain anonymous.



## At home in the city of strangers by Mary E. Gardner

There's a corner of the bridge near the cathedral where you can stand out of traffic and watch folks fishing for salmon in the River Corrib. The air is clear, the water is soft, and the salt breeze from beyond the Claddagh smells like home. I passed this spot almost every day for a month last summer when I was studying in Galway, and more often than not I stopped for at least a little while.

Our course of study at the National University of Ireland focused on the Irish education system. We were twenty-eight teachers and administrators from across the United States who learned not only from expert lecturers and guides, but also from each other. Many Irish teachers took time from their own summer holidays to meet with us on several occasions, providing a rich and enlightening dialogue. Classroom presenters had many years of experience in, and most have contributed publications to, their areas of focus.

For me, the most memorable learning came from our trips out



through Connemara and along the west coast. Watching Michael Gibbons draw maps in the sand of the intertidal zone cemented the relationship of land and water over the past ten thousand years. Walking across this same sand to Omev Island was exhilarating, especially when we realized the tide was starting to come in a little sooner than we had anticipated. I even enjoyed following sheep trails and trudging through bogs on Inishbofin with this man who had mapped the islands along the coast of Ireland. Still, nothing topped the moment when a pod of dolphins joined us to play around the ship on our way back to the mainland.

Of course, the Irish education system is not complete without an understanding of the history, music, and poetry that so deeply infuse every aspect

of daily life. We read works of Yeats, then stood under the copper beech at Coole Park inscribed with his initials. The Galway Arts Festival was in full swing, so we enjoyed a range of exceptional performances. From Trad on the Prom to the grand array of pubs across the city, we had access to the best music on the planet.

But it's the day-to-day moments that made Galway so comfortable. Whether grabbing a sandwich at the grocery or trying to figure out the bus schedule to Maynooth, people were unfailingly kind and patient. I could stroll along the river in peaceful meditation or strike up a conversation with almost anyone who walked by.

I loved the quiet moments in a corner tea shop, and the crowds stretching from Eire Square to the Spanish Arch. The shopping was great, too! There's a reason people write songs about this town. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is actually a reflection of the sun setting on Galway Bay, and that is a treasure worth returning to as soon as possible.

## Studying the language and promoting all things Irish by Crystalline Muse

I am delighted to be taking the intermediate Irish class at Elms College with Pádraic Déiseach.

Studying with a native speaker of Irish at Elms College has significantly improved my facility with the language. Being able to hear him speak and to converse directly with him in Irish has afforded me a unique opportunity to learn. This is incomparable with any other methods. At the moment, I know of no other opportunity to study with a native speaker in the region.

In my last essay, I described in detail

my devotion to the Irish language and culture. In short, it is part of my personal life's mission to promote Irish culture and traditions. To this end, I study, perform, and teach or share with others Irish dance, Irish fiddle music and traditional songs, Irish folklore and customs, and the Irish language.

For example, a project I have been working on is learning traditional Irish prayers and blessings and sharing them at various gatherings that I attend and host. Sometimes I also set these pieces to music and have

people sing them with me in a call and response manner, so that they can hear the Irish and repeat it back. As well, I direct a chorus in Greenfield, and I regularly make Irish music a part of our repertoire. Currently, the members are learning the traditional Irish song *Dúlamán* which I only feel I could teach with authority through my study of the language. I hope to continue this journey through more classes with Pádraic Déiseach this semester at the Elms. I use the language in my performing of Irish music and in my teaching about Irish culture.

## Bad tidings: graveyard clay by Chip Costello

**D**o you know any person like Caitriona Phaidín in the film *Graveyard Clay*? There were one hundred or so people at the fourth film in the series sponsored by the Irish Cultural Center, and there wasn't laughing but instead pity for Caitriona Phaidín.

Caitriona is the main character who is waiting for her sister to die so that they can continue their feud. We learn about her through the stories of the other people in town. After each new death, Caitriona meets a dead person under the cemetery, and she asks them how her sister Nell is. Caitriona is still jealous of Nell. Unfortunately, each person discusses how the splendor of the world is on Nell. Caitriona is sad when she gets this knowledge.

Caitriona is mean, cross, disrespectful, and miserable. She hates to see her sister's prosperity. Caitriona despises each person that she sees.

I began the article with a question.

When I was speaking with other people at the film, they said that they knew "Caitriona" - perhaps a cousin, neighbor, or co-worker. "Caitriona" is vicious unless everything is to her own liking.

In conclusion, life is short, and you should relax, "Caitriona". I am certain that she would say: "A bad finish on you" or "A stone on your pile." Whatever - Cait.

An bhfuil aithne agat ar dhuine cosúil le Caitriona Phaidín sa scannán *Cré na Cille*? Bhí céad duine, a bheag nó a mhór, i láthair ag an gceathrú scannán sa tsraith a fuair urraíocht ó Ionad an Chultúir Éireannaigh, agus ní gáire a bhí ag an slua do Caitriona ach trua.

Is í Caitriona an príomhcharachtar agus tá sí ag fanacht go bhfaighidh a deirfiúr bás ionas gur féidir leo leanúint leis an bhfíoch eatarthu. Foghlaimimid fúithi ó scéalta mhuintir eile an bhaile. Tar éis gach bás nua, buaileann Caitriona leis an duine

marbh faoin reilig agus fiafraíonn sí díobh conas atá a deirfiúr Nell. Tá Caitriona in éad le Nell fós. Ar an dro-chuair, tugann gach duine le fios go bhfuil gliondar an domhain ar Nell. Bíonn brón ar Chaitriona nuair a fhaigheann sí an t-eolas seo. Is duine suarach, crosta, dímhéasúil agus cantalach í Caitriona. Bíonn sí spréachta nuair a chloiseann sí go bhfuil ag éirí go maith lena deirfiúr.

Thosaigh mé an t-alt seo le ceist. Nuair a bhí mé ag caint le daoine eile a bhí ag an scannán, dúirt siad go raibh aithne acu ar 'Chaitriona' éigin - col ceathrar, comharsa nó comhoibrí b'fhéidir. Is duine mailíseach drochmhúinte í Caitriona mura mbíonn gach rud ar a toil féin.

Mar fhocal scoir, tá an saol seo gearr, agus ba chóir duit do scíth a ligean, a Chaitriona. Táim cinnte go ndéarfadh sí: "Droch-chríoch ort" nó "Cloch ar do charn". Bíodh agat, a Cait!

## Fun-filled day offers opportunity to learn Irish ; join the group to connect with the Irish in speaking their language

**W**e invite you to Lá na Gaeilge - a day of immersion in the Irish Language on Saturday, May 5, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The registration fee, due on April 22, 2012, is \$40 for members and \$50 for others. It includes lunch and all activities: classes, workshop, music session and a lecture.

Young people of high school, college age and younger may participate at a reduced cost of \$10 to cover the cost of lunch. When they register, participants, depending on their ability will choose beginner, intermediate, or advanced level. Call the Center 265-2537 for a brochure or download

from the web site: [www.irish-cairde.org](http://www.irish-cairde.org).

The day offers a learning opportunity for groups: those who would like to begin the study of the language, for those with some background in the language, as well as for fluent speakers.

Experienced language teachers from outside the immediate area will offer classes in the morning and again in the afternoon on several levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The program includes workshops: Irish set dancing and Irish sports, as well as a lecture by Fulbright Teacher, Padraic Deiseach,

about the Irish language. Deiseach, Jonathan Kennedy and Amanda Bernhard will lead conversations with groups of participants as part of the program as well. The day will conclude in a seisiún (session) with all present - teachers and participants invited to join the music with voice or instrument. Participants are encouraged to bring instruments and songbooks with them.

This is our fifth annual workshop and we hope a great number will attend.

**Labhair í agus maireóh sí!  
Speak it and it will live!**

**Irish Cultural Center  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**“Keeping the Irish  
Arts Alive!”**

## **ICC Calendar of events**

**Ongoing:** Language Classes offered each semester; call the Registrar at 413-265-2314 or Continuing Ed Office at 413-265-2490.

**Genealogy volunteer**  
Ed Callahan 413-527-5091 or email [eastgram@aol.com](mailto:eastgram@aol.com)

**March 11,** 2:00-5:00 p.m. Ceili at Sons of Erin

**March 18** St. Patrick's Parade: join us in the march in Holyoke

**April 11** 7:00 p.m. The Sinking of the Titanic presentation

**April TBD,** 7:00 p.m. “Men of Ventry” with Brenda Ni Shuilleabhain presentation

**May 5,** 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
La Na Gaeilge—day-long Irish workshop

**July 23-27,** 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
Celtic Adventures for Kids

**August 25-September 3**  
Journey of the Soul - Trip to Ireland

**September 14-30** exhibit at the Big E with Dingle merchants

**October** TBD Annual breakfast

**December 2** Christmas with an Irish Touch

**For information on our partner Irish organizations, check out the programs.**

**AOH**  
[www.AOH-Holyoke.com](http://www.AOH-Holyoke.com)

**John Boyle O'Reilly Club**  
[www.jbo-club.com](http://www.jbo-club.com)

**Sons of Erin**  
[www.sonsoferin.com](http://www.sonsoferin.com)

**St. Patrick's Parade Committee**  
[www.holyokestpatricksparade.com](http://www.holyokestpatricksparade.com)

**W**e all know that the Irish are noted story tellers, and readers of this newsletter know that we welcome articles from our readers. Perhaps you have a story about your Irish grandfather's walking stick or favorite cap. Perhaps you can recount a story of the old country that you heard as a child from an elder relative. Perhaps you can share the story of an incident/experience you had while visiting Ireland. We will print our next edition at the end of April. Please consider submitting your story.