



The Cairde Connection

"Keeping the Irish Arts Alive!"

Irish Cultural Center at
Elms College

Volume 11 & Issue 4

March 2010

Invitation to honor Patrick, share a cup of tea and enjoy Irish music by Sr. Judith Kappenman

You are invited to our annual St. Patrick's Tea on Sunday, March 7, 2010 at 2 p.m. in Dooley Campus Center dining hall. We will feature entertainment by the Healys, refreshments and the drawing of a raffle for a lucky person to join our September trip to Ireland. We gather to honor Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, as well as to socialize with friends. Come, join the fun.

Don and Sheila Healy are Irish musicians who have performed in the area for many years. They perform at the Sons of Erin in Westfield, the John Boyle O'Reilly Club in Springfield, Donovan's Irish Pub, as well as for many other groups and organizations throughout the year. However, they are in increased demand during this month.

They will encourage audience members to clap their hands and sing along with the familiar tunes. Don Healy is a popular radio personality with the Healys' Irish Program which airs on Sunday mornings 10 a.m.-12

noon on WACM AM Radio-1490.

To culminate our 10th anniversary year we are hosting a September trip to Ireland. During the event we'll have a drawing for the three winners of our \$50 raffle. This is the last chance to purchase a ticket. First prize is a trip for two on the September tour or \$4,000; second prize \$500; third prize \$100.

We will also honor the three middle school essay contest winners: Mary Brouder, Holy Trinity, Greenfield; Richard Del Valle, Jabish Brook Middle School, Belchertown; and Joshua Kisselbrook, St. Agnes School, Dalton. In their essays they compared two sacred sites of Ireland. They will receive their prizes and a certificate, and the first place student will read her essay. In this ninth year of the contest, we received over forty entries from several schools in the area.

The event is free and open to the public, although donations will be accepted. The Dooley Campus Center is handicapped accessible.

Photographer to visit

Internationally known photographer John Minihan from Cork, Ireland will visit the area during the first week of March to take photos of some of the local elder Irish immigrants in an exhibit called "To Love Two Countries" that encompasses New England cities and towns. The exhibit will open at Boston College in May.

Many Irish immigrants left Ireland in the mid 1900s and this exhibit is an effort to capture some of their stories. The immigrants are from different counties of Ireland and live in different cities in this country. They have led interesting and successful lives in their new country.

Before he visits Western Massachusetts, the photographer took pictures in Boston. He will also travel to Rhode Island and Connecticut.

The project is sponsored by the Irish Arts Center of New York. Last year, a similar project took place with photos of people from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania with the exhibit opening in New York City to great acclaim.

Second wine tasting event set for May

Our second Wine Tasting with an Irish Accent is announced for May 7, 2010 in the Dooley Campus Center dining hall. Tickets are now on sale for \$30 each.

When we hosted our first wine tasting event in 2007, we were sold out. In order not to be disappointed, put the date on your calendar, plan to join us and order your tickets now.

Damien Collins of Lighthouse Liquors in Chicopee and East Longmeadow will work with distributors to provide

the best in wine, beer, and ciders for sampling. Aramark, the Elms food service, will prepare a fruit and cheese tray, green salad, pasta, desserts and bread.

The money raised will support the Elms Irish Studies Minor Program.

Some readers may be surprised to learn that Ireland boasts a long standing wine tradition dating about 2000 years. Desmond Castle in Cork houses the International Wine Museum and is home to the

Order of the Winegeese. Soldiers who fled Ireland in 1691 were called "Wild Geese."

Irish emigrants have played a pivotal role in the world's wine trade since the early 1700s. Barton, Clarke, Dillon, Johnston, Lawton, Lynch, McCarthy, Quinn are some of the native-born Irishmen who have established successful ventures in vineyards and wine production throughout the world.

The Irish Cultural Center, founded in 1999, 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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Chicopee, MA 01013

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Upcoming events scheduled

On Sunday, March 21 we'll march in the Holyoke Parade and invite members and friends to join us behind the banner of the Irish Cultural Center.

As part of our 10th anniversary celebration the three founders, Sister Kathleen Keating, Tom Moriarty and Sean Curran will ride in style in a 1970 Cadillac driven by Bruce Fitzgerald.

Catherine Shannon will deliver an illustrated talk entitled “The Wreck of the Brig St. John and its Commemoration, 1849-1999” on Sunday April 25 at 2 p.m. in the Alumni Room of Dooley Campus Center.

In 1849 a “famine ship” filled with Galway and Clare emigrants escaping the potato famine, were hit by a severe storm off the coast of Massachusetts near Cohasset. When the ship sank after hitting the rocks, ninety-nine people died. About

twenty survived. The loss of life affected many families. In fact, whole families were wiped out.

June 4 Rosemary Caine's Wilde Irish Women: a Concert in Alumnae Library Theatre. Fee: \$15. Watch for details.

June 5 La Gaeilge day-long language workshop. \$45 members, \$50 non-members. Watch for details.

Celtic Adventures for Kids (grades 1-9) is scheduled for July 26-30 from 9 am to 3 pm. Daily classes are Irish dance, music, language, stories and arts and crafts. They will also swim daily in the Maguire Pool.

For ten years, under the able leadership of Mary Ellen O'Brien, the camp has yearly welcomed fifty young people to “keep the Irish arts alive.”

The cost for the week is \$200 with a \$20 discount for Irish Cultural Center members, as well as a \$20 discount for an additional child from the same family. A non-refundable \$50 deposit is due June 4 with final payment due July 9.

Board members and Committee help

We have a good core of volunteers at the Center, but we always welcome more help. Of course, the first and most important group is the board of directors who meet monthly on the second Thursday of each month at 7 pm in the first floor Conference Room of Berchmans Hall. Guests are always welcome.

If you are interested in becoming a board member, let us know what you can do to help and we will consider your application.

We also have people who work on committees on the language, events, genealogy, and finance committees. Others help to prepare mailings and catalog books. If interested in helping, contact the Center.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Jim Hoar honored recently as one of the Reminder Hometown Heroes for his work raising funds for veterans.

Note of Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of John “Diamond” Shea.

Keep in prayer all those who are ill or in treatment: Sister John Brigid Barrett, Suzanne Meserve, George Bresnahan, Teresa Harris, Margaret Stasiowski.

Comparing Newgrange and Clonmacnoise by Mary Brouder

Ireland is a country of rich culture and history. Numerous examples of ancient architecture can be found throughout the country. There are many sacred sites and relics of the past dating back thousands of years. People from all over the world travel hundreds of miles every year to view these spectacular places. Two of the most well known and frequently visited sites are Newgrange and Clonmacnoise.

Newgrange, located in County Meath, was a Megalithic tomb chamber for great tribal leaders. Clonmacnoise, located in County Offaly, was a monastery and center of religion, learning, and trade. These sites differ in many ways.

First, they were built in different eras. Newgrange was built around 3200 B. C., while Clonmacnoise was founded much later in 548 A.D. Second, they were built to honor two different gods. Newgrange was said to be dedicated to the sun god, Dagha. Carvings of suns and other similar symbols on many of the rocks point to sun worship. The builders actually created a special hole above the entrance of the chamber so that on the winter solstice, December 21, the sun's rays will shine through the long passageway to light the burial chamber.

In contrast, Clonmacnoise was dedicated to worshiping Christ when Christianity was widely spread throughout the country. On the high

crosses in Clonmacnoise, there are many carvings that tell stories from the Christian Bible.

A third difference is the purpose of why these sacred sites were built. Newgrange was built as a burial chamber for tribal leaders. Clonmacnoise was built as a monastery for men who wanted to devote their lives to the

Christian God. Another difference was the time it took to build each site. It is estimated that Newgrange would have taken twenty years to build using 300 men. In contrast, Clonmacnoise was a site that was added to over the centuries. Cathedrals, castles, churches, round towers, and Christian grave slabs were some of the features of Clonmacnoise added at different times. High crosses were built around the ninth century and are on display in the Clonmacnoise museum.

Although these sites differ in many ways, they also have a great deal in common. The primary similarity is that they were both sacred to the people who built them. The fact that they put so much effort into building an elaborate symbol of their faith shows the importance that religion played in their lives. Another similarity is that they both served as burial places for important people. Although Clonmacnoise was not primarily meant to be a tomb, Rory



O'Connor, the last high king of Ireland, was buried in the cathedral in 1198. A third similarity is that both sites are constructed of stone, which is the main building material of Ireland. This is what has helped keep them standing until today. A final similarity between these sites is their great ability to attract visitors today, thousands of years later. Newgrange was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Two hundred thousand people come to see it every year. Clonmacnoise was designated a national monument and also attracts many tourists.

In conclusion, Newgrange and Clonmacnoise are two sacred sites of Ireland that represent the history of the country and the culture of the people. They show the Irish's strong faith and their skill in architecture and craftsmanship. They have survived for thousands of years and now that they are protected, they will continue to last into the future.



Mary Brouder is the first place winner in our middle school essay contest. She attends Holy Trinity School, Greenfield.

**Pictured above: Clonmacnoise
Below: Newgrange**

**IRELAND TOUR INFORMATION SESSION
SUNDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2:00 P.M.**

The Irish Cultural Center is sponsoring a “one-of-a-kind” custom tour—exclusively designed for our 10th Anniversary. This is a “New” and Special 11-Day tour to the East & West Coasts and Northern Ireland (September 4-14, 2010)—Includes Westport, Donegal, Derry, Belfast, Dublin and much more! Come and hear about this exciting tour at a one-hour slide presentation. Light refreshments served. Deposits of \$300 will be taken to hold your spot. LOCATION: 2ND FLOOR, DOOLEY CAMPUS CENTER, ELMS COLLEGE, SPRINGFIELD STREET, CHICOPEE. **Cost of the tour is \$2,349 pp/do. (Tour includes *Superior First Class* hotel accommodations, RT air fare on Aer Lingus, 16 meals, admission to attractions, RT bus from Elms College to Logan Airport, hotel tips & taxes.)**

RAFFLE TICKETS for a chance to WIN THIS TRIP FOR TWO are still available! \$50 donation per ticket—tickets will be sold until the drawing on March 7th OR while tickets last! Ticket sales limited to 200. Second Place \$500; Third Place \$100. Call Kathy Gallivan at (413) 536-9709 or visit the ICC website at www.Irish-Cairde.org for more information about the tour or raffle.

Final Info Session!

O’Hara book reading rescheduled: successful events begin the year

Kevin O’Hara was unable to travel to the Elms College on February 23 because of the winter weather. His book reading is now scheduled for March 23 at 7 p.m. in the Alumnae Library Theater.

O’Hara’s second book chronicles his childhood experiences of growing up in an Irish Catholic home in the mid-twentieth century. He portrays a family that was poor in material good, but rich in family values and faith. Home, church, school and neighborhood friends played a central and defining role in his life.

On four Wednesdays in January and February Heather Lowe welcomed about eighty people for each of four films she had chosen. The audience enjoyed each one but saved the applause for the film “How About You.” This 2006 film

was universally praised as a delightful movie.

Sunday, February 21 about thirty interested people came to hear Sister of Providence Ruth McGoldrick deliver a lecture on Celtic Christianity. Her historical overview gave us a wonderful context into which we can place current issues and events. We were all able to see ourselves as well as family and friends in the Celtic characteristics described. She presented a very full picture for our consideration.

The handout which she shared will hopefully serve as guidance for future study and reflection. The Celtic Spirituality book she suggests as a good resource is available in the Elms Bookstore for \$18.

On Sunday January 24 more than eighty people gathered in the Irish Cultural Center to congratulate Michael Carney for the degree received in Celtic Studies from the University of Ireland, Maynooth. He was recognized for his work in promoting the language and the preservation of his island home—the Blasket Island. Gerald Costello acted as emcee and Sister Kathleen Keating gave the welcome of the Elms College and the Irish Cultural Center; Carney’s son-in-law, Jerry Hayes, presented a slide show, “This Is Your Life” with photos chronicling the life of this man who left the island at the age of sixteen and who emigrated to the United States in 1948.

Irish Sacred Sites by Richard Del Valle

Today we will be comparing two Irish sacred sites. The first is Newgrange and the second is the Hill of Tara. Both are located in county Meath, and both are ruins. Many similarities can be found between these two sites. However, there are many distinct differences as well. Size is perhaps the most notable difference, with Newgrange being far bigger than the Hill of Tara.

Before we talk about Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, I believe we should talk about sacred sites in general. A sacred site is a place thought holy by one or more religions. For instance, both of these sites are very important to multiple religions. Sacred sites are all over the world, from Australia to Austria. Many people make special visits to sacred sites. These visits are called pilgrimages, with perhaps the most famous being the pilgrimages to Mecca. In Ireland, there are many sacred sites. Some are famous, but many are obscure.

Newgrange was built about 3200 B.C. It is the finest of the three great passage tombs, and it is older than the Great Pyramids and Stonehenge. Nobody knows for whom the Tomb was originally built, but it was clearly used for great tribal leaders, and later used for the pagan kings of Tara. It is generally agreed that Newgrange was used for ceremonial and religious rites. Legends say the mound is dedicated to Dahga, an ancient Sun God,

and sun symbols adorn the walls. The Mound subsided shortly after being completed, collapsing the quartz façade and burying the curbstones.

Yet despite this damage, Newgrange was still an important sacred site for its worshipers, and it stayed that way until the Bronze Age. The tomb was emptied during 861 A.D. by Viking raiders. Matters were not helped when there was a period of about 100 years when anyone could just walk in and take anything. Now the tomb rises from the meadow in tumulus or an egg-shaped mound. It is 250 feet across and forty feet high. The exterior is decorated by almost 100 curbstones. The façade was made with luminous white quartz brought from fifty miles away with egg-shaped granite stones punctuated throughout. An amazing phenomenon happens on the winter solstice. On that day, the sun goes through a hole on the roof and touches a stone basin, which lights up many spiral carvings.

The younger Hill of Tara was built between 2500 and 2100 B.C. The site remained in use for thousands of years. During the Iron Age, it was used as the center of the Celtic High Kings of Ireland. Roman artifacts were found there dating from the first to third centuries. Saint Patrick visited Tara after lighting the “Paschal



fire.” The kings abandoned the Hill of Tara in the sixth century; however, the Hill of Tara is still in the news today. In 1798 rebels fought British Troops on the hill, and in 1843, a peaceful protest against Britain occurred with over 750,000 people protesting.

The two sacred sites are very similar, with both Newgrange and the Hill of Tara major religious sites and located in County Meath. They also share a tumulus and birthdates in prehistoric times. But they are also very different. Tara was built with Celtic architecture and Newgrange was built with Neolithic. Tara has maintained a relevance to modern man, while Newgrange has not. Perhaps Tara’s Celtic architecture provides visitors with a more relevant style that connects with modern man.

Not all sacred sites are created equal, not even ones that share a country and even a county for a home. Ireland boasts many of these sites and each is worth a lengthy visit, but if time is limited, a trip to county Meath can provide access to two special sites.

Richard Del Valle is second place winner of our middle school essay contest. He attends Jabish Brook Middle School.

**Pictured above: Newgrange
Below: Hill of Tara**



Sacred Sites of Ireland by Joshua Kisselbrock

Ireland is known as the land of lush green pastures and rich history, home to religious, historical and natural sites that attract people from around the world. It is a country filled with sacred sites, among them the Rock of Cashel and Skellig Michael.

There are not a lot of similarities between them, but both are Christian sites. The Rock of Cashel was built for worshiping purposes and Skellig Michael was introduced to Christianity through a Viking named Olav Trygvasson.

The differences between these two sites, however, are numerous. Skellig Michael is located on a steep rocky island off the coast of southwestern Ireland. Skellig Michael was first inhabited in 500 A.D. by hermits who lived in beehive-shaped huts made of stone. The huts located at the top of the cliff can be reached by climbing up 600 stone steps. Skellig had defended itself against Viking raids and attacks, which killed many monks. Skellig was abandoned around 1100 A.D. but became a popular destination, and many pilgrimages are still made there.

The Rock of Cashel was built sometime around the ninth century. The Rock of Cashel, being more complex than Skellig, had a chapel, a cath-

edral, and an extensive graveyard. The Rock used to be just a great house for the kings of Munster until one king in 1101 gave it to the church. Through the front door is the hall of the Vicars Choral, where some chanting services are still being done today. The most important building was Cormac's Chapel which contained the oldest and most important Romanesque wall paintings. At the end of the west side is a beautifully carved sarcophagus that might have Cormac himself in there. Cormac was the most famous of the ancient High Kings of Ireland. There is a cathedral, but there is not much to say about because it is bare and unfinished. Outside there is an extensive graveyard that contains a number of high crosses. A high cross is a free-standing, richly decorated Christian cross made of stone. It is a symbol of status, either for a monastery, a sponsor, or a patron.

Skellig Michael was established because a group of monks wanted to pray in isolation so they deliberately chose a steep rocky island. The Rock of Cashel was established because even though it was a small castle when it was donated to the church, the archbishop wanted to turn it



into a spiritual place of sacred prayer. Some of the people who visit Ireland to see those sites come from other countries. Many of them are Americans, but some are from Asia and various parts of Europe. Ireland is so beautiful that it attracts people from around the world. Some of the Irish themselves make pilgrimages to Skellig Michael and the Rock of Cashel.

Despite an increasingly secular society, people will continue to visit sacred sites because, regardless of religion, Ireland attracts people to its beauty.

Visitors may not know what the site is about, but they understand that what they see is beautiful. People today need spiritual guidance even if they do not realize it. They need that spiritual guidance so they can be more connected to the spiritual sites they are seeing and wondering about.



Joshua Kisselbrock is the third place winner of our essay contest for middle school students. He attends St. Agnes School, Dalton

**Pictured above: the Rock of Cashel
Below: Skellig Michael**

As an Obair a Fhaightear an Fhoghlaim By Gerald Costello

I received an email the other day from Kathy Riordan. Many of you probably know that she is a retired language instructor and former head of foreign language programs for the Springfield School System. The email contained an attachment from the December's Economist Magazine. The article was entitled "In Search of the World's Hardest Language." The complexity of a number of languages was discussed in the article; however, there were two concluding statements that made me pause. "Half of today's languages may be gone in a century. Linguists are racing to learn what they can do before the forces of modernization and globalization quiet the strangest tongues."

In a small way at the Cultural Center, we have been involved in several activities to do our part in helping to raise the visibility of the Irish language in our community. Riordan was instrumental in suggesting to The Language Educator magazine a piece on "Saving The Irish Language."

Sure enough - the February issue has a five page article devoted to the topic. The Irish Cultural Center at Elms is referenced for its efforts. We have a copy of the magazine in the Center. Stop by so you can see it.

There has been increased interest in the Irish language non-credit courses offered jointly through the Elms and the Center. Nineteen new students enrolled in the Introductory I class this semester. This class is for those with no prior knowledge of the lan-

guage. The focus is on the basic structure of the language and utilization of common expressions.

We have added an Introductory 2 class for those who have had at least one semester of study. The Intermediate class is for students who have had several semesters of the language and want to improve their reading and conversation. Advanced students meet weekly to make additional progress on reading, writing and conversing. Finally, a dedicated group that has met for years on Friday evenings continues to improve their translation and communication. Overall, there are now 45 members of the Center who are involved in language study. **Búiochas le Dia!**

The Center has recently purchased computer software RosettaStone for use in the Center to assist language students to learn the language or improve their skills.

Another effort to raise the visibility of the language can be seen through a joint proposal of the Irish Cultural Center Board and the Elms. We made an effort to secure an Irish Language Fulbright teaching assistant for the next academic year. If we are successful in that effort, we would have a qualified, fluent speaker of the language who would offer credit courses on behalf of the college and non credit courses on behalf of the Center. This increased visibility would be great for the language, the Center, and the Elms.

There have been some independent efforts by students to use additional regional resources to improve their language skills. Recently, two members attended the Daltaí na Gaeilge weekend in New York to focus on conversation. Four other members will attend the La Gaeilge event at Iona College. Finally, two members will be sitting for the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge exam sponsored by NUI Maynooth in May.

Over eighty friends, family, and acquaintances recently attended Dr. Michael Carney's recognition event at the Center. His ongoing efforts to preserve the language and culture have been enormous. His teaching in Springfield throughout the years was recognized and praised. Special guests at the event included Michael Lonergan, Consul General from Boston; Richard Neal, Congressman; Michael de Mordha, Blasket Center Director; and Muiris Bric, an Irish language novelist.

Maith thú, a Mhíicil!

As an obair a fhaightear an fhoghlaim. So what does this expression mean? "It's from the work that one finds learning." And the 'work' - the opportunities to study, learn and further the language - is the commitment of the College and the Center. Through this work we each learn more about ourselves and our history. It is the language that enables our traditions to continue. As our efforts are linked with others around the world, An Gaeilge will not be one of the languages that will be gone within a century.



Left: Michael Carney with the Blasket Island in the background.

Right: Richard Neal, Michael Carney, Michael Lonergan, Michael De Mordha



**Irish Cultural Center
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ICC Calendar of events

Ongoing: Language groups meet weekly: Intro Irish 1 & 2, Intermediate 1 & 2, Irish Study Group. Call the Graduate Office at 265-2218.

Genealogy volunteer
Ed Callahan (413) 527-5091 email eastgram@aol.com

March 7, 2 p.m. St. Patrick's Tea (includes raffle drawing), Alumnae Room, Dooley Center

March 10 The Chieftains at UMass, Amherst bus trip (SOLD OUT)

March 21 Join us for the Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade

March 23, 7 p.m. Kevin O'Hara book reading "A Lucky Irish Lad"

March 28, 2 p.m. Journey of the Soul Information session, Alum Room, Dooley Campus Center

April 25, 7 p.m. lecture "The 1849 Wreck of the Brig St. John" by Catherine Shannon, Alum Room in Dooley

May 7, 6-8 p.m. Wine Tasting with an Irish Accent—fundraiser for the Irish Studies Minor program, Dooley Campus Center dining hall

June 4, 7 p.m. Rosemary Caine's Wilde Irish Women: a Concert.

June 5, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. La Gaeilge day-long language workshop. Watch for details.

July 26-30, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Celtic Adventures for Kids summer camp

September 4-14 Journey of the Soul

September 17-October 2
Exhibit at the Big E, WS

We are grateful to the Irish Consulate, Boston for funding of the lectures by Sister Ruth McGoldrick and Catherine Shannon.

EVENTS OF INTEREST

The local Irish organizations have events throughout the year. Check out their March programs.

AOH

March 14, Communion Breakfast following 8 am Mass at St Jerome's Church
www.AOH-Holyoke.com

John Boyle O'Reilly Club

www.jbo-club.com

Sons of Erin

www.sonsoferin.com

St. Patrick's Parade Committee

www.holyokestpatricksparade.com