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# MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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## Glengarry Bhoys Disband

The Glengarry Bhoys – Glengarry, Ontario’s favorite sons and adopted by central New York as a mainstay of the Great American Irish Festival – have decided to disband, owing to physical health problems of its leader, co-founder and backbone, Graham Wright. In a letter to Great American Irish Festival director Matt Sullivan, the Bhoys’ agent, Tim Drake, explains: “It saddens me to have to bring the following news. Co-founder and leader of The Glengarry Bhoys, Graham Wright, has been struggling with serious medical problems for some time now. His condition has worsened, which has worn him down to the point where he can no longer tour. On advice of his physicians, he is retiring from the band, with plans to rest and focus on his health. The Glengarry Bhoys would obviously find it impossible to continue without Graham's creative and management leadership, therefore, the group has decided to disband, effective immediately. I am sure you will all join with The Roots Agency in extending to Graham, as well as all the members of the Glengarry Bhoys, your warmest wishes and prayers for healing.” Expressing the sentiments of all who had the pleasure of getting to know the band, professionally and personally, Sullivan wrote “Graham and the band have become friends of ours and not having them at our festival will create a huge void for us and our festgoers. We hope that his prognosis is good and wish all of the band members the best. There is no question that the Glengarry Bhoys made an enormous contribution to the rapid growth and success of our event.” We at MVICE also wish Graham a full and speedy recovery. *Slainte Mhath!*



## Ciaran Sheehan performs “From Galway to Broadway”

Irish tenor Ciaran Sheehan, veteran of such Broadway musicals as “Les Miserables” and “The Phantom of the Opera,” will appear at The Egg in Albany on Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, performing “From Galway to Broadway.” Dublin native Sheehan – whose musical career began with an event that seems divinely inspired (he wanted to be an altar boy but turned up unknowingly at choir audition; wondering instead why he had to sing so many songs for the priest) -- will be joined by award-winning soprano Gay Willis for an evening of show tunes and traditional Irish favorites. Willis is no stranger to the stage herself, having starred as, among other things, Christine in “The Phantom of the Opera” opposite both Colm Wilkinson and later Sheehan. Tickets for the 7 PM show, which is being presented in cooperation with WMHT Public Broadcasting, are \$28 for adults, \$24 for seniors and \$14 for children. The Egg is located in the Empire State Plaza in Albany, New York. For ticketing or additional information, contact the Box office at (518) 473-1845, or visit their web site at <http://www.theegg.org/>.

## Patrick Street Tour Comes Oh, So Close

Irish supergroup **Patrick Street** makes a rare New York State stop as part of their 2007 tour; with a show (possibly two) taking place a mere “road trip” away -- the first at Studley Theater in New Paltz on November 16<sup>th</sup>, and a second show (possibly private) in Livingston NY on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Patrick Street, comprised of Kevin Burke (ex-Bothy Band) on fiddle, Andy Irvine (Planxty, Sweeney’s Men) on bouzouki and vocals, Ged Foley (The Battlefield Band) on guitar, and John Carty on fiddle, flute and banjo, are known throughout the Irish music world as four of its most brilliant players. Beginning as a one-time tour of four recognized masters, nearly two decades and eight albums later this “supergroup” has reached legendary status. Coinciding with their US tour is their first studio release in four years, *On the Fly*, which comes out on November 13, 2007. Of special interest on that CD – their most purely traditional in years – is the farewell recordings of original member, celebrated accordionist Jackie Daly, who has decided to step down from the band. Studley Theater is located at 68 Mountain Rest Road in New Paltz, NY, and tickets for the 8 PM show are \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members (in advance) and \$30 at the door. Why not take advantage of this rare opportunity and check out the band that the Irish Echo calls “An overall joy...Irish traditional music performed with fervor and fidelity.”

## Great American Irish Festival Update

With the Great American Irish Festival a mere 265 days, 4 hours, 56 minutes and 19 seconds away... make that 265 days, 4 hours, 55 minutes and 40 seconds...uh, 265 days, 4 hours, 55 minutes, 11 seconds... With the Great American Irish Festival set to start scant months from now, much of the hard work has been done, but there is still a need for volunteers for next year’s 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, scheduled for July 25-27 at the Herkimer County Fairgrounds in Frankfort. Having now been officially recognized as one of the top tier Irish festivals in the world, the Great American Irish Festival certainly has a storied history to live up to, and its committee promises no less than the best festival ever, with continued growth and improvement in nearly every aspect. And talk about an impressive entertainment lineup? Well... you’ll have to wait a bit for that one. Suffice it to say that the entertainment is almost entirely finalized, and further suffice it to say that you will be absolutely blown away by the 2008 lineup. In January, Hart’s Hill Inn in Whitesboro will be the site of the annual Halfway to GAIF Hooley – definitely a favorite of cabin-feverish Central New Yorkers (and the GAIF volunteers, who get first – and possibly only? – dibs at tickets) – at which time, the stunning lineup will be announced. Don’t you wish now you had volunteered? And if you are a GAIF volunteer, we will not tolerate any taunting, no matter how much you try to convince us that “Nyah nyah” is Gaelic for “Wish you were here.” For now, stay tuned for more details on this event, and for other festival updates, in this newsletter and on the Great American Irish Festival web site ([www.gaif.us](http://www.gaif.us)). And one final thing: It’s still not too late to become a volunteers. Why not join the “Nyah nyah” team?

## “Freedom for All Ireland” Christmas Appeal

On Saturday November 10th, the Albany AOH will run its annual concert to benefit the **Freedom for All Ireland Christmas Appeal**. Freedom for All Ireland is a national AOH program whose cause is “...Peace with Justice in a Free and United 32 County Ireland.” All proceeds go to benefit men and women in the North of Ireland who were political prisoners along with their families, including job training, and personal, family, and legal counseling. Despite the end of the 38-year old British campaign known as Operation Banner and the associated withdrawal of British soldiers, there is still a need for financial and political support that comes from nationwide FFAI fundraisers. The Albany AOH is the largest single contributor in the United States. The concert, which includes a presentation of the “Fr. John Murphy” Award to Paul Murray by the Hon. Michael McNulty and a musical performance by **Ciudan**, starts at 7 PM. Tickets are \$20. For more information and to make reservations, contact Mark Kleege at 518-433-7290 or Steve Downs at 518-872-0953. The Capital District Irish American Center is located at 375 Ontario St in Albany.

## More on “Thistle & Shamrock”

Last month, we announced that radio station WAER had begun running the nation’s most popular Irish radio program, Thistle & Shamrock, on Sundays from 11AM to noon, at 88.3 on the FM dial. Unable to clearly bring in that signal in anything but my car (and equally unable to clean my house from my car), I was elated to discover that the same show is repeated on Sunday evening, from 7 to 8 PM, on WRUN-AM; 1150 on your dial. And mine. This month’s lineup is:

**November 4 - Soundtracks** From the epic *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*, to the intimate *Songcatcher* and *Heartlands*, hear the contributions made by Celtic music to many modern cinema soundtracks.

**November 11 - Tale O' the Bank** Rivers run through many of the best-loved landscapes, and they are now often the focus of urban regeneration and rural rediscovery. This week features traditional and contemporary songs celebrating rivers as sources of life and timeless inspiration.

**November 18 - Best of the Best** This program presents "best of" compilations this week with The Chieftains' vintage collection *The Very Best of the Claddagh Years* and Capercaillie's *Dusk till Dawn*.

**November 25 - Viking Invasion** A hoard of Viking treasure unearthed in Yorkshire has been proclaimed the most important discovery of its kind in Britain for 150 years. We mark the find with a haul of new Nordic music.



### From the Irish Kitchen (*recipes suitable for clipping*)

#### This month’s recipe – “*Reuben Casserole With Crumb Topping*”

Here's another great way to enjoy leftover corned beef, or a pre-leftover chunk at the local deli. Serve this tasty and hearty casserole with a tossed green salad or sliced tomatoes.

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 to 2 cups diced corned beef, about 8 ounces	1/2 cup light Thousand Island dressing
16 ounces sauerkraut, preferably fresh, drained and rinsed, squeezed dry	1/4 cup mayonnaise, light or regular
2 tablespoons grated onion	1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese	<b>Topping:</b>
1 cup shredded mild Cheddar cheese	3 slices rye bread
	2 tablespoons butter, melted

#### PREPARATION:

Spray an 8-inch square (2-quart) baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Heat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, combine corned beef, sauerkraut, onion, cheeses, dressing, mayonnaise, and pepper; stir with a spoon or hands until well blended.

Pat into prepared baking dish. Tear bread into pieces and process until crumbs are fine, or at least better than most (haha). Put in a bowl and toss with the melted butter. Sprinkle crumbs over the casserole. Bake for 45 minutes, until topping is browned and filling is bubbly. Serves 6 to 8.

*If you try this recipe, feel free to share your experience with all of us; and of course, if you have a recipe you'd like to share, please contact Beth Loftis at [bloftis@verizon.net](mailto:bloftis@verizon.net).*

*Book Review:*  
**“The Rebels of Ireland”**  
*Submitted by Mark Sisti*

Edward Rutherford returns to till the fertile ground of Irish and Dublin history in “The Rebels of Ireland,” the follow-up to his epic novel “The Princes of Ireland,” and the result is a huge and engrossing, if uneven, work. Since I’m sure you have all committed to memory the review of “Princes of Ireland” printed in the May 2006 issue of this newsletter, I won’t rehash the plot here. “The Rebels of Ireland” (which I hesitate to call a sequel because of a lack of continuity) picks up where the earlier novel left off, at the time of the ill-fated Irish Revolt of 1534 and follows the thread of Irish history through plantation, the coming of Cromwell in the mid-1600s, the infamous potato famine in the mid-1800s, and continuing through to the struggle for Irish independence which led to the 1916 Easter uprising.

As he did in “Princes” – which, incidentally, you do not need to have read to enjoy “Rebels” – Rutherford follows a thread of generations of several fictional families to tell the story of actual events, having these fictitious characters interact with some of the great names in history, including Cromwell, Swift, O’Connell, and Parnell, among others. While the conceit at times feels forced, it does manage to convey a sense of historical perspective.

“The Rebels of Ireland” covers a period of time which, while still expansive, is considerably shorter than that of its predecessor and, as a result, this book as a whole is much more cohesive and less segmented. Furthermore, with the greater amount of time he can devote to each character’s story, Rutherford is able to impart a much greater depth to his characters and, as the characters become more real, the historical events they witness become more real.

As the risk of blaspheming, parts of this book reminded me of “War and Peace” (which shares the difficulty of trying to tell too many stories about too many families at the same time). While he consistently condemns Britain’s subjugation of Ireland (and the utter contempt of the English for the Irish) Rutherford does an admirable job of objectively presenting the viewpoints of both the oppressed Catholic majority and the Protestant minority holding the power.

To be sure, there are problems with this novel. While it is an enjoyable read, it is probably more accurate to describe it as impressive than as fun. As in his other historical novels Rutherford seems more intent to put his meticulous research on display than to simply tell the stories of his characters. At times his penchant for having his characters carry on debates about the topics as they unfold makes for an awkward transition from engaging story to dry dissertation.

In addition, the book is misnamed; there is very little in here about the various rebellions, which, with a few notable exceptions, are treated in an almost cursory fashion. The extended chapter dealing with the famine, on the other hand, while beautifully told and moving, has only the most peripheral connection to the story of Dublin which Rutherford purports to be telling. The 1916 Rising, in particular, is given very short shrift, as if Rutherford happened to notice how long the book was by that point and decided it was time to bring things to a close. As a result, the culminating and defining event the entire two-book set leads up to and prepares the reader for becomes instead almost an afterthought.

Still, these faults hardly detract from what is a compelling, educational and engaging read that is well-worth the time commitment it will take. It is a novel that will entertain you and leave you knowing more about the subject than you did before you read it. And, after all, isn’t that all you can ask from historical fiction?

*[Editor’s note: If you’ve enjoyed these book reviews – and it’s clear from the feedback we get that you do – you will be happy to hear that we will be putting together a separate collection of Mark’s insightful pieces, which we’ll make available to anyone who might be interested in reading the reviews, and in reading the books for themselves. We are also hoping to get one of our local libraries/vendors to make available the current books being reviewed as the “Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events” reviewed book of the month]*

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ Brian Conway and Brendan Dolan will be performing traditional Irish music at the Celtic Hall, 329 Columbia Turnpike, in East Greenbush NY. The concert is preceded by a series of workshops (4-6 PM, \$35), with the concert itself starting at 7:30PM. Admission for the concert alone is \$10. The contact for the concert and workshops is Kevin Roe, who can be reached at 518-479-1029.
- ✚ **Northeast Region Meeting and Hall of Fame Inductions** The Northeast Region of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann is hosting the Northeast Region Meeting and Hall of Fame Inductions on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, at the American Legion Hall, 16 West Poplar Drive, Delmar. To reserve your ticket, please phone Charlie Fink at (518) 283-4691. The day will include their meeting of Delegates and Officers from 10-4, Mass 5-5:45, Buffet Dinner 6:15-7:30, mini concert and Induction ceremonies at 7:45, followed by dancing and session. Those who wish to skip the dinner and attend only the session are invited to do so.
- ✚ **Teasers** No, “Teasers” is not starting to run Irish music (so no jokes about “Topless of the morning”). What this means is that we want to tease you with some hints of upcoming shows in and around the area, with details to follow next month. Of course, being the Christmas season, there will be no shortage of Celtic Christmas-themed shows; The **Grada Christmas Tour** at the Earlville Opera House and **Eileen Ivers’ An Nollaig - An Irish Christmas** at the Egg being the two primary events. In January, you can catch **MacTalla Mór Celtic Roots Band** performing at a Holy Family Irish Hooley in Syracuse, or maybe you’d prefer to see... **The Elders** at the Capital Theater in Rome, NY. Got your interest now? Stay tuned for more details.

**Celtic Club Calendar** Finally, here’s the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for November.

Nov 2	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 3	Pat Kane	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 4	Syracuse Irish Session	HalfPenny Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 9	Cliudan	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 9	Donal O’Shaughnessey	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 10	Donal O’Shaughnessey	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 10	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Nov 11	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston’s Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 16	Old Friends	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 16	Cassidy and McCale	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 17	Blarney Rebel Band	The Salty Shamrock	Herkimer	9 PM	\$3
Nov 17	Neil Emberg	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 18	Blarney Rebel Band	Airport Ramada Inn	Oriskany	5-8 PM	Free
Nov 23	Blarney Rebel Band	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 23-24	TBD	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 29	Traditional Irish Session	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Nov 30	Causeway Giants	<a href="#">Kitty Hoynes</a>	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 30	Donal O’Shaughnessey	<a href="#">Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub</a>	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free

That wraps it up for this month. If you have anything you want to add to this newsletter, feel free to contact us at [sistia@adelphia.net](mailto:sistia@adelphia.net), [bloftis@verizon.net](mailto:bloftis@verizon.net) or [marksisti@adelphia.net](mailto:marksisti@adelphia.net). In the meantime, don’t forget to set your clocks back on Saturday night, don’t forget to vote on Election Day, don’t forget to thank a veteran, have a great Thanksgiving...and stop tracking mud across my nice clean floor!