
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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May 2008

31st Annual “East Durham Irish Festival” to be held

On May 24 and 25, the 2008 Celtic festival season unofficially gets under way, as the quaint little town of East Durham hosts its 31st annual “East Durham Irish Festival.” Billed as the “...longest running Irish festival in the U.S...,” the East Durham Irish Festival carries on its outstanding tradition of bringing in the finest music, food, children’s entertainment and family fun, at the Michael J. Quill Cultural and Sports Centre Headquarters, on 2119 Route 145 (off Thruway exit 21). New for 2008 will be 16 time Grammy Award Winning group, **The Jimmy Sturr Band** performing two shows on Saturday. Also on tap for 2008 are **Enter the Haggis, Greenwich Meantime, Glengarry Bhoys, The Screaming Orphans, The Four Young Ladies, Shannon McNally, The Andy Cooney Band, Celtic Cross, Shilelagh Law, The Prodigals, Kitty Kelly Band, Jameson's Revenge, Calley McGrane and The Exiles, and Kevin and Katie McKrell and The Hard Road Céile Band** and **St. James Gate**. The Albany Police Pipe and Drum Band and the Michael Farrell School of Irish Step Dancing will also appear both on Saturday and Sunday. Children will have their own area, featuring their own music tent along with rides and games. Also added this year is **The First Steps of Irish Dance**, designed to teach children basic steps of Irish Step Dancing.

Tickets for adults are \$13 until 2 PM, after which admission is \$16. Children under 12 are free, as is parking. For further information, call 1-800-434-FEST, or check out their web site at <http://www.east-durham.org/memfestival/>.

“Celebration of Celts” Marks 5th Anniversary



On Saturday and Sunday, May 3-4, 2008, make plans to attend the annual “Celebration of Celts” at the Columbia County Fairgrounds in Chatham, NY. Celebration of Celts is a non-profit foundation devoted to the weaving of a proud fabric whose colorful threads tell the tale of all the Celtic peoples. It is a trip back in time as re-enactors move you through the world of Celts from 300 B.C. to the Second World War. Watch real battles, see living history as it really happened. Expanded to two days, this event features everything from Pipe bands to Celtic Rock Bands, activities for the children, and an outstanding lineup of music, including sets by **Enter the Haggis, Barra MacNeils, Coyote Run, Kevin McKrell, Black 47, Dacey Riley, 77th Regimental, Balladeers** and dancing by **Solas En Lae and Twisted Tassels Gypsy Tribal Dancers**. Also returning this year is the very popular “**Piping Outside the Box**” competition, featuring contenders **Oran Mor, Schenectady Pipe Band** and **Police Pipes & Drums** of Waterbury, CT. Tickets are free for children 12 and under, \$12 for Seniors 62 and over, and \$15 for Adults, with a Family Pack available for \$45. Tickets are slightly lower if purchased via their web site.

Chatham is a 40-minute drive southeast of Albany, and the Columbia County Fairgrounds are located on Route 66. The festival runs on Saturday from 9:00 AM to Midnight, and on Sunday from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. For more details, check out <http://www.celebrationofcelts.com>.

“My Dream of You”

Book Review by Mark Sisti:

It’s probably a little misleading to describe “My Dream of You” as Nuala O’Faolain’s debut novel. For one thing, she is a world-respected and award winning columnist, most recently with the Irish Times, whose book-length autobiographical essay, “Are You Somebody? The Accidental Memoir of a Dublin Woman” became an international best-seller. For another, those who have read “Are You Somebody?” – which shares much thematic, plot and character material with the novel – may find themselves wondering just how fictional “My Dream of You” actually is. Not to worry. Superficial similarities aside, “My Dream of You” more than stands on its own.

Expatriate Irishwoman Kathleen de Burca, the protagonist, is unmarried, about to turn 50, living in a dreary basement flat in London and trying to deal with a turning point in her life brought on by the death of her co-worker and closest friend. She is an extremely successful travel writer; in fact, it is the winning of a lifetime achievement award for travel writing that allows her to quit her job. But despite her professional success, her personal life is unsatisfying and devoid of passion, and Kathleen is obsessed with the concept of passion: “I believed in passion the way other people believed in God: everything fell into place around it.” Ironically, however, throughout her life Kathleen has done everything she can to avoid (or sabotage) any relationship that could engender passion, whether with friends, lovers, her family, her homeland, even pets. She has, in fact, done everyone in her power to insulate herself from any connection whatsoever.

Her career as a travel writer forces her (or allows her) to avoid having any sort of place she can call home. What passes for a love life consists of meaningless and depressing one-night stands with anonymous men for whom she has no feelings. She is purposely estranged from her family and Ireland and has become disconnected for an extended period of time from her best friend. Her closest personal relationship is with her co-worker and confidant Jimmy, a relationship that is perfectly safe for her, because Jimmy is gay. Even the cat she feeds who hangs around her basement flat belongs to someone else.

Jimmy’s death has caused a major upheaval in her life, and now, nearing 50 years of age, she is worried she may never know true passion. With that as her driving force, she returns to Ireland to investigate and possibly write about a nineteenth-century adultery and divorce case that has fascinated her for years. The documents she has read have given her only the barest facts: Marianne Talbot, wife of English landowner Richard Talbot, was sued for divorce in the English Parliament because she had a sexual affair with William Mullan, a groom on Talbot’s Irish estate.

The book Kathleen envisions is a classic tale of all-for-love passion, but her research turns up a more complicated story, and she is constantly forced to reassess her own views in light of new revelations of old events. At the same time the Talbot story is being revealed, Kathleen’s story is also being revealed bit by bit to the reader, and O’Faolain skillfully interweaves the two stories in a manner that makes them both connected and absorbing. For it is not only the reader who is learning about Katherine, it is Katherine herself, as she tries to understand her beliefs, her unresolved family issues, and her self-destructive behaviors.

As she becomes more and more part of the Irish town she is living in, she finds herself accepted into a new surrogate family and discovers the possibility of love in the bargain. Her new relationship, however, is with a married man, the type of safe but pointless relationship she has built her life around, and she is forced to face the dilemma of whether or not to seize what may be her last chance for love and passion.

Don’t think for a moment that this is some torrid soap opera, however. “My Dream of You” is a moving and remarkable story that proves that the term “coming of age” doesn’t just apply to adolescents. It is a story told with humor, with brutal honesty, and with a moral conscience. If you’re looking for a novel with a perfect protagonist, you can pass on this one. But if you like believably flawed complex characters dealing with universal questions about love, passion, intimacy and connection in an isolating age, you will love “My Dream of You.”

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

This month's recipe... Apple-Oatmeal Crisp with Irish Whiskey Cream

This treat, prepared by Emerald O'Gassey – I mean Emeril Lagasse – on a 2001 St. Patrick's Day show, is sure to please all of you who have written to say that you just aren't getting enough apples and whiskey in your diet.

INGREDIENTS :

APPLE-OATMEAL CRISP

- 1 stick cold unsalted butter cut into pieces
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 lb Rome Beauty or Winesap apples peeled, cored and sliced
- 1/4 cup Irish oatmeal
- 2 tbl fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped walnut pieces toasted
- 1 cup light brown sugar (packed)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour

IRISH WHISKEY CREAM

- 2 tbl Irish whiskey
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tbl sugar
- 1/4 tsp cardamom
- 2 tbl Irish whiskey

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 374 degrees, then kick it up a notch to 375. Lightly butter an 11- by 7-inch baking pan and set aside.

In a large skillet, melt 3 tablespoons of butter over medium-high heat. Add the apples, lemon juice, 1/2 cup of the brown sugar and 1 tablespoon of the flour. Say hi to the band. Stir well, and cook for 5 minutes. Add the whiskey, cinnamon, cardamom and salt, stir well, and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

In a large bowl combine the remaining flour, oatmeal and remaining 1/2 cup sugar. Add the remaining 5 tablespoons of butter, and with your fingers or a pastry blender, work the mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs (the mixture, not your finger). Add the walnuts and mix well, randomly saying "BAM!!" to amuse anyone watching you.

For Irish Whiskey Cream: Whip the cream until it begins to form soft peaks. Add the sugar and whiskey and beat until stiff peaks form. Cover and chill until needed. Makes about 2 cups.

Place the apple mixture in the greased pan and sprinkle the crumb mixture evenly over the top. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 35 to 40 minutes. Serve hot with the Irish Whiskey Cream. This recipe yields 4 to 6 servings.

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.

Music to your Ears

Marking its 18th year, **Thistle & Shamrock**, featuring award-winning radio host Fiona Ritchie, explores evolving music from Celtic roots in Europe and North America. In this area, the nation's most popular Irish radio program can be heard on WAER on Sundays from 11AM to noon, at 88.3 on the FM dial, and again on Sunday evening, from 7 to 8 PM, on WRUN-AM; 1150 on AM radio. For more information visit the Thistle & Shamrock page at <http://thistleradio.com>. This month's lineup is:

May 4: **Raise Your Voice**

Solo singing is revered in traditional circles, but layers of harmony and massed voices create stunning arrangements of traditional and folk song. Add your voice to the choruses with choirs from Scotland and Brittany and some of your favorite bands in fuller voice.

May 11: **Welsh Roots**

Check out some of the emerging roots music from Wales with established and emerging artists, including master of the Welsh triple harp Robin Huw Bowen, vocal duo Ember, Rag Foundation and Welsh folk fusion group Ffynnon.

May 18: **Words and Music**

Uncover musical connections with Stevenson, Yeats, Scott and other literary figures, in the company of Bonnie Rideout, Loreena McKennitt, Battlefield Band and Jean Redpath.

May 27: **Passing the Torch**

Glimpse the future of Celtic music in recordings from some fine artists paired with a few of the masters who have inspired them, such as North Carolina native Andrew Magill and the great Chicago fiddler Liz Carroll. She described Andrew's first album as "an awesome debut."

And if you're a subscriber to Sirius Satellite Radio, you're also going to be able to catch the irrepressible **Larry Kirwin**, whose show "**Celtic Crush**" can be heard on "Sirius Disorder" (Channel 70) on Saturdays from 10 AM to 1 PM, and again on Tuesdays from 10 PM to 1 AM. You've heard Larry with his band, Black 47, at the Great American Irish Festival, and in Dec 2006 at the Munson-Williams-Proctor-Institute; now you can tune in to Celtic Crush to hear what Larry likes to listen to; as he "...travels among diverse music, from old to the very new." From the Sirius web site: "Ireland native Larry Kirwan has firsthand experience throughout Ireland and America as a member of the premier Celtic rock band Black 47. Being an author as well as a performer adds to Larry's unique abilities as a poetic host. His guests have ranged from Lunasa to Celtic Woman. Larry draws from his private record collection of classic Irish music for this three hour soulful mix of traditional and contemporary music from the Celtic countries and England."

Tour the Emerald Isle with the Great American Irish Festival!

How would you like to join Great American Irish Festival group as they tour Ireland from Nov 5-13, 2008? That's right, members of the GAIF committee have contracted with Celia Antonik of JRP Travel for a 10-day coast-to-coast tour of the homeland... and they want you to join them. You'll see such sights as Blarney Castle, Guinness Storehouse, Jameson's Distillery, Dingle, the Cliffs of Moher, the Book of Kells, the Cobh of Cork and lots more. This isn't just a survey to see if there's enough interest; it's booked, and it's happening for sure. That said, space is limited and going fast, so if you are interested, contact JRP Travel at (315) 796-8671 or email celia@jrptravel.com as soon as possible for more information. You've always said you wanted to get to Ireland someday... so why not now? Join us for a trip you'll remember forever!

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

✚ **Calling all Volunteers** Claudette Johnson, Great American Irish Festival Volunteer Coordinator, needs your help. With the Great American Irish Festival now covering three days, she needs even more volunteers than last year, in a variety of areas. In addition to the “usual areas,” there are some new and growing events, including a Gaelic Mass, the CW Teen Zone and the GAIF Irish Food Booth. If you would like to step up and help in any of these areas, or if you have a particular skill or specialty that might benefit the organization, she'd love to hear from you. Volunteers get free admission to the festival and a Staff shirt, and with the extended length of the festival, satisfying a minimum total commitment of 6-8 hours still allows you plenty of time to enjoy the rest of the festival. If you are interested in helping, it is important that you submit your information to the volunteer page on the GAIF web site (www.gaif.us). Important note: Even if you volunteered last year, she would still like to you go to the web site and enter the information anew.

✚ **Mother's Day at Accents of Ireland** The lovely ladies at Accents of Ireland report that they will be having a giveaway for Mother's Day. From now through May 10th, you can receive a free gift with a \$10 minimum purchase. They would also like you to know that they now have Celtic Thunder DVD and CD's, as seen on PBS. Add to that the fact that they also have tickets to the 2008 Great American Irish Festival... well, why would you do your Mother's Day shopping anywhere else? For more information, call (315) 733-4940 or fax them at (315) 733-0513.

✚ **Interested in becoming a GAIF Sponsor?** If so, there's still time to climb on board “the fastest growing Irish festival in the country.” For more information on how you or your company can get involved, and the benefits that your sponsorship can derive, contact Festival Director Matt Sullivan at Director@gaif.us.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for May.

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| May 3-4 | Celebration of Celts | Columbia County Fairgrounds | Chatham, NY | 9-mid (Sat); 10-6 (Sun) | \$15 Adults, \$12 Srs, kids free |
| May 4 | Syracuse Irish Session | Nibsy's Pub | Syracuse | 4-7 PM | Free |
| May 4 | Pat Kane | Coleman's Irish Pub | Syracuse | 4-7 PM | Free |
| May 9 | Donal O'Shaughnessy | Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub | Washington Mills | 6-9 PM | Free |
| May 10 | Traditional Irish Session | Kitty Hoynes | Syracuse | 2-5 PM | Free |
| May 16 | Donal O'Shaughnessy | Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub | Washington Mills | 6-9 PM | Free |
| May 17 | Hair of the Dog | The Parting Glass | Saratoga Springs | 8 PM | \$12, res. reqd. |
| May 17 | Donal O'Shaughnessy | Kitty Hoynes | Syracuse | 9 PM | Free |
| May 18 | Syracuse Irish Session | Johnston's Bally Bay Pub | Syracuse | 4-7 PM | Free |
| May 18 | Cliudan | Coleman's Irish Pub | Syracuse | 4-7 PM | Free |
| May 22 | Craobh Dugan Open Session | Café Domenico | Utica | 7:30-10 PM | Free |
| May 23 | Blarney Rebel Band | Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub | Washington Mills | 6-9 PM | Free |
| May 24-25 | East Durham Irish Festival | Michael J. Quill Cultural and Sports Centre | East Durham | 11-11 Sat 10-11 Sun | \$13 (\$16 after 2 PM) |
| May 25 | Flyin' Column | Coleman's Irish Pub | Syracuse | 4-7 PM | Free |
| May 28 | Traditional Irish Session | Kitty Hoynes | Syracuse | 2-5 PM | Free |
| May 31 | Hair of the Dog | The Parting Glass | Saratoga Springs | 8 PM | \$12, res. reqd. |

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, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. Be sure to check out next month's issue, when we tell you about a movement to collect up historical mementos to be displayed in the Utica Irish Cultural Center, and how you can help. Until then, Happy Mothers' Day and Memorial Day!