
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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Makems, Conway Headline Broome Irish Fest

For several years now, Pat Kane has bemoaned what he perceived as a scarcity of true traditional Irish music at Irish festivals. Finally, he decided to do something about it. Last year, Pat took over the reins of an Irish festival hosted for several years by Tipperary Hill in Binghamton, and thus the Broome County Irish Festival was born, with the goals of presenting the best in traditional Irish music and dance, benefiting a worthy cause and, well, just putting on a fun festival for the whole family.

“This will be the second annual Broome County Irish Festival, though Tipperary Hill has hosted an Irish festival for many years,” noted Kane, a well-known Southern tier-based performer. “The emphasis has always been to create a family oriented event.”

This year’s festival will be held on Saturday, June 14, the day before Fathers’ Day. The event will run from noon to nine, rain or shine. The Broome County Irish Festival has always been dedicated to promoting traditional Irish music and dance and this year has expanded its scope to include more of the world’s finest Irish talent. Headlining the event will be The Makem Brothers, with Mickey and Liam Spain, along with Brian Conway and his band.



Pat Kane with Amy Lange will be featured early on the main stage, and The Stoutmen will carry the show in the pub area. The Broome County Celtic Pipes & Drums will open the day at noon, and the Moloney Memorial Pipe Band will perform in the evening. Dancers from the Carle, Montague, and Ring of Chiarraigh schools will perform throughout the day. A running jam session will be available all day for visiting musicians to join in, and Brian Conway will offer a fiddling workshop.

Several vendors will provide an opportunity for specialty shopping. Irish food and beverages will be available as well as typical festival fare, and children’s activities will be offered.

The Makem Brothers, Shane, Conor and Rory, were born in Drogheda, County Louth, north of Dublin. They continue the lineage of one of Irish music’s dynasties, begun by their grandmother Sarah Makem, who was sought after by song collectors for her store of traditional Irish songs, and continued through their father, the legendary Tommy Makem. The Spain Brothers, Mickey and Liam, also learned Irish songs at their father’s knee. The power of their combined talents has formed an act that has been called by one reviewer “the definitive Irish folk singers of their generation.”



Brian Conway has several times won the All-Ireland fiddling championship, and has brought many of his own students to that same honor. Brian will be accompanied by world-class accordionist John Whelan, award-winning Terry Kane on vocals, and Brendan Dolan on piano. The music resulting is perfect for Irish ceili dancing, and the public is invited to dance the jigs, reels, polkas, and waltzes on the spacious dance floor. The festival will again be hosted in the rural setting of Tipperary Hill, 331 Knapp Road, just north of Binghamton NY, near the airport. Admission will be \$10 per person, children under 12 free. Profits from the festival will be donated to the Banjo Burke Memorial Fund for Parkinson’s Research and Traditional Irish Arts.

For more information or to reserve tickets, call 1-888-333-4PAT or visit the festival website at www.bcirishfest.com

Meet the GAIF Headliners:

BARLEYJUICE

OK, quick question: how many of you have heard of the Elders? OK, now try this one: how many of you had heard of The Elders at this time last year? One of the goals of the Great American Irish Festival has always been to introduce you to acts you might not have heard or might not have had the chance to see. One year it was a little known band called Enter The Haggis, before the world-wide acclaim. Another time it was Rathkeltair, now perhaps the hottest band on the festival circuit. In 2007 it was the Elders, fast becoming the number one Celtic act in America. This year, the band that everyone leaves the festival talking about might be Barleyjuice, the hilarious and high-energy Celtic band from out of the Philadelphia area that's making noise throughout the Irish music world.

A few hundred lucky local fans got a preview of what's in store when Barleyjuice performed at the official Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade post-party this past March, and the experience may have prepared the band for what they can expect as well. "The parade party back in March was a hoot," noted Barleyjuice co-founder Kyf Brewer. "When you look out into a crowd at a place you've never been and see people with Barleyjuice shirts who know all the words to some of the tunes, it makes you feel like it's working. Looks like you all really know how to throw a party. We're a silly bunch, so that's where we begin to feed off the crowd."

Barleyjuice – one word, thank you – has been drawing comparisons to Shane MacGowan and the Pogues, Tom Waits, Ronnie Drew, the Rolling Stones, even Monty Python, but their original material is just that, original, while their take on traditional tunes is anything but traditional. Think these guys have a hard time taking themselves seriously? They list their influences as "anyone who can hold their liquor" and describe their sound as "Like a male cat in heat being run over by a milk truck in the wee hours. Only better." Actually – questions about male cats being in heat aside – it sounds much better.

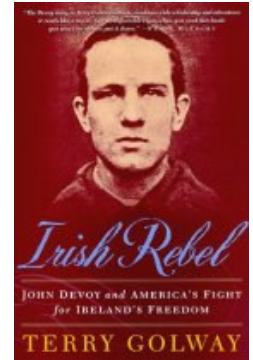
Their first recording – titled, strangely enough, "Barleyjuice" – was steeped in traditional Celtic songs, but by their second album, "Another Round," more than half of the material was original. They continued to add their own original tunes as well as trad favorites, and the band's fourth album, "Bonnie Prince Barley", has Brewer excited about the future. "I think it draws us closer to that mark. I was able to use a lot more of my pop sensibility in writing the tunes for it, and I think it will ultimately be what makes us stand out a bit from our favorite bands on this circuit."

Their tongue-in-cheek element delights audiences, thanks in large to the musical prowess with which the witty material is presented. Their original material is energetic and clever with an overriding sense of fun, but none of that would matter if they didn't play well. Well, don't worry. This is a group of well seasoned musicians wielding a barrage of instruments - guitar, fiddle, accordion, bagpipes, bouzouki, mandolin, harmonica, banjo, tinwhistle, piano, bass and drums – and boasting hard-driving rhythms and tight vocal harmonies. Celticradio.net listeners voted "What's Up Yours?" Song of the Year for 2005, in 2006, Six Yanks made #14 on Paddy Rock Radio's Top Twenty short list (paddyrock.com), and "Whiskey To The Sea" was listener-voted ShowStopper Track on CelticFolkPod.com's last show of the year. Now GAIF festival-goers will have a chance to catch what has the Irish music world so excited.

"We're extremely excited to play the Great American Irish Festival because it's not only huge, but right in the middle of one of the corridors we've been working for the last few years," said Brewer. "A lot of fans have written in, saying, 'see you in Utica', so I think it will be great. We're looking forward to playing for a ton of new people."

Book Review:
“Irish Rebel”
By Mark Sisti

One aspect of the Irish fight for independence that has never been fully explored is the significant contributions of the Irish-American community to that effort and, of that group, no one made a larger contribution than John Devoy, an Irish exile who was at the forefront of the Irish-American advocacy for Irish independence for close to 60 years. Now the fascinating story of this greatest of the American Fenians, and a pivotal, if undeservedly forgotten, figure in the history of Irish nationalism is told by Terry Golway in “Irish Rebel: John Devoy and America’s Fight for Ireland’s Freedom.”



Golway begins his story with Devoy’s voyage to America, after he is imprisoned for rebel activities and his sentence commuted on the condition that he agree to live out the remainder of his days in exile. Thus begins a lifelong and tireless commitment to the cause of the independence of his ancestral homeland, carried out from his adopted homeland. Devoy attended meetings, wrote editorials, traveled, orated, raised funds and organized membership campaigns. He worked alongside and/or quarreled with almost every important Irishman of note during his lifetime. He played a crucial role in providing weapons for the rebellion and was the driving force behind the daring escape of Irish rebels from their imprisonment in Australia (brilliantly recounted by Thomas Keneally, in “The Great Shame,” which was not-so-brilliantly reviewed in this newsletter in January, ’07.

During his long life, Devoy was an agitator, fundraiser, campaigner and journalist who helped fund Parnell, Patrick Pearse and Michael Collins, and who carried on long, bitter feuds with Woodrow Wilson, in whom he perceived a distinct anti-Irish prejudice, and Eamon de Valera, for whom Devoy’s initial admiration quickly developed into an intense hatred that bordered on paranoiac. In the process he sacrificed his personal happiness; the scenes near the end of the book where he meets with the fiancé he had left behind decades before are poignant, as the elderly pair renews their acquaintance (mostly by mail, although he is rumored to have proposed again) near the end of their lives.

Golway – a journalist himself – keeps his writing sharp and unemotional, with a narrative drive that carries the tale through its long and convoluted paths. What is not often realized or acknowledged is that the constant infighting that hindered the Irish cause in Ireland was reflected in the efforts of the Irish-American supporters of the establishment of an Irish republic, and it’s hard to keep track of who’s backstabbing whom. Devoy’s attempts to navigate the political landmines before the outbreak of World War I and during the war, as Irish-Americans are torn between their hatred of England and their devotion to their adopted country, make for fascinating reading.

Although he was anything but reticent with his professional and political views and became known for his sarcastic and blistering attacks on his enemies – my personal favorite: he wrote that he and de Valera could never get along because “I have the temerity to insist that words have only the meanings given to them in the dictionary” – Devoy, for the most part, kept his personal emotions to himself and, as a result, the picture painted of him comes off a bit cold and distant; anecdotal incidents scattered throughout, however, give evidence of a caring and generous nature. What emerges is the complex nature of Devoy, who, unlike many of the Irish rebels, was able to temper his idealism with a pragmatism that enabled him to accept situations that, while not perfect, may have been the best possible given the circumstances.

One could make the case that the fight for Irish freedom could not have been conducted without the funding, weapons, oratory, and direct assistance from Irish-Americans, and from John Devoy in particular. Golway's book gives you a good start into understanding why.

Erie Canal Comes Alive with the Sounds of Irish Music

Third Annual "Festival on the Erie" to Make Local Stops

Carmello R. Mantello, Director of the New York State Canal Corporation, announced plans for a 9-day traveling music festival and celebration along the New York State Canal System this summer. The "Boys of Wexford" – an ensemble musical cast from around the northeastern United States – will travel from Marcy to Waterford in Saratoga County on the Erie Canal from June 21-29, bringing the sounds of Ireland to upstate New York and honoring the achievements of the many Irish immigrants who helped build the Canal.

"We are pleased to welcome back the Boys of Wexford and the Festival on the Erie to New York's Canal System. Last year's festival drew large audiences who came out to hear some great regional and ethnic music and learn more about the history and heritage of the Erie Canal and New York State. This year's festival will once again provide fun-filled entertainment for the whole family to enjoy."

This year's Festival will feature Canal ballads, music of the sea, old-time country and folk songs from Ireland and Canada. Each show will have a special theme and audience sing-a-longs and instrumental "jam sessions" will make for a memorable evening at each of the stops. Featured musicians and performers at this year's Festival will include Four Shillings Short, Don Sineti (resident Shantyman at Mystic Seaport, Conn.), Claudine Langille (member of Gypsy Reel), Sheri Mortimer (a student of Tommy Makem, known for her old-style Irish tunes), as well as many other fiddlers, bones players, banjo pickers and singers.

Scheduled stops:

- June 21 - Lock E-20, Marcy - 1 to 5 p.m.
- June 21 - Ilion Marina - 6 p.m.
- June 22 - Gems Along the Mohawk, Herkimer - 3 p.m.
- June 22 - North Broadalbin - 7 p.m.
- June 23 - Utica - 7 p.m. Utica Monday Night series
- June 24 - Arkell Museum, Canajoharie - 7 p.m.
- June 25 - Loopies Pub, Tribes Hill - 7 p.m.
- June 26 - American Legion, Broadalbin - 7 p.m.
- June 27 - Riverlink Park, Amsterdam - 7 p.m.
- June 28 - Freedom Park, Scotia - 7 p.m.
- June 29 - Waterford Visitor Center, Waterford - 11 a.m.



For more information, contact Mike McGarry at 860-296-6128 or 860-570-1312

MacTalla Mor to perform at Rome Cultural Concert Series

MacTalla Mor, which is Gaelic for Great Echo, will give a rare local performance at the Rome Art and Community Center's ArtHouse Café, on June 13th at 8 PM. Headlining the Coffeehouse Performance Series, MacTalla Mor features the great highland bagpipes, piano, vocals and bodhran in a dynamic mix of traditional Celtic roots, rock, jazz, hip hop, calypso and fusion. Their ancient and modern instruments along with their Gaelic and original songs, "...brings the past to life creating a joyous, poignant and powerful experience for audiences of all ages" (plus I like their motto: "The pipes are calling; resistance is futile!"). With only 65 seats, every seat is the best seat in the house. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$15 for adults (\$12 if you're an RACC member), \$10 for seniors (\$8 for members) and \$8 for students (\$6 for members). The Rome Art and Community Center is located at 308 W. Bloomfield St. Call 336-1040 for more info.

28th Annual Old Songs Festival Brings in Liz Carroll and John Doyle

From June 27-29, the Altamont Fairgrounds will play host to the 28th annual Old Songs Festival. Old Songs is a family-friendly festival of folk, traditional, Celtic and world music and dance, known for its relaxed atmosphere, interactive sessions and workshops, hands-on experience and participatory nature. In addition to three concerts there are 120 daytime workshops given by performers. Also featured are a juried craft show, food and instrument vendors, and a well-run children's activity area. Among the packed schedule are legendary Irish American fiddle master Liz Carroll and Irish guitar powerhouse John Doyle, great traditional music from Quebec's Le Vent du Nor, fiery fiddler April Verch from the Ottawa Valley, and much, much more. For more information and to check out the variety of ticket packages, visit their website <http://www.oldsongs.org/festival>, or call 518-765-2815.

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

This month's recipe... Irish Coffee Ice Cream

Inspiration for this indulgence came from the popular beverage that marries coffee, Irish whiskey, and cream, or as we like to call it: Breakfast. Irish whiskey is less pungent than Scotch whisky and sweeter and cleaner in taste than American bourbon whiskey. Omit the whiskey if you wish, or use Irish Mist, a liqueur made of whiskey and honey, for a slightly sweeter note. Then put on a dress.

INGREDIENTS :

1 cup sugar
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
4 cups half-and-half or light cream
3 beaten eggs
1/4 cup instant coffee crystals
1/4 cup whiskey or Irish Mist liqueur

METHOD:

In a large saucepan combine sugar and gelatin. Stir in half-and-half or light cream. Cook and stir over medium heat till mixture almost boils and sugar dissolves.

Remove from heat. Stir about 1 cup of the hot mixture into beaten eggs; return all to saucepan. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until slightly thickened. Do not boil. Stir in instant coffee crystals and whiskey or liqueur. Cool. Transfer the mixture to a 4-quart ice-cream maker and freeze according to the manufacturer's directions. This, too, is cool.

Or, transfer the mixture to a 9 x 9 x 2 inch baking pan. Cover and freeze 2 to 3 hours or until almost firm. Break frozen mixture into chunks. Transfer to a chilled bowl.

Beat with an electric mixer until smooth but not melted. Return to pan. Cover; freeze until firm.

Makes 1 1/2 quarts (12 to 16 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.

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

- ✚ **From the "Well, it's about time!" file...** Local Irish balladeer **Vince Colgan** has recently completed his first CD, and the lovely ladies at Accents of Ireland have it. A few, in fact. The title is, aptly, "The Irish Balladeer," and it features Vince with Zachary Remis and Nora Colgan Franklin. The inside jacket says "I have been inspired by two great Irish singer/songwriters. Tommy Makem, a friend for over forty years, passed away recently and will be sorely missed. Tommy Sands, a newer friend and wonderful ambassador of peace and song. With them I continue to sing the songs of home." Vince has long been our area's premiere ambassador of Irish music, and has himself inspired nearly every Irish musician and act in the area. Congratulations, Vince... and ladies, better set aside three copies for us.
- ✚ **Blarney Rebel Band CD Being Readied for Release** One of those local bands inspired by Vince Colgan is the **Blarney Rebel Band** from Whitesboro, and they too have recently finished recording their second CD. Our crack research team heard that it may be called "Buy This CD or We Shoot the Dog;" but upon sobering up, they think it might instead have been "Buy My Soul." Whatever its name, the band is shooting...uh, aiming... for a July release date. Stay tuned for more information. Or we shoot this dog.
- ✚ **Celtic Butterfly Festival** Intrigued? So were we... but when our crack research team did its normal Google search on "Celtic Butterfly Festival," he got surprisingly few hits! Luckily for us, our crack friend... that is to say, our good friend Lynn Kent was able to provide the following: On Saturday, June 7th from Noon to 6:00 pm, there will be a Celtic Butterfly Festival held at the Joseph L. Popp, Jr. Butterfly Conservatory, in Oneonta NY. Irish music will be supplied by the Sean Fleming Band and the Brian Hyland Band (not the "Yellow Polka-Dot Bikini" guy). Also on hand will be Irish dancers, the Brewery Ommegang, face painting and vendors of all things Celtic. Admission to the festival is free with the purchase of a ticket to see the butterflies, at \$8.50 for adults, and \$6.50 for seniors and children under 11. The Butterfly Conservatory is a live tropical butterfly exhibit and botanical garden where visitors can see and walk among hundreds of live, free flying butterflies from around the world in a huge indoor conservatory herbarium; home also to hundreds of exotic plants. If you want more information, don't bother Googling; just call the Conservatory at 607-435-1147. The Conservatory is located at 5802 State Hwy 7 in Oneonta; Exit 16 off I88.
- ✚ **Mini-Music Festival** Matt Nelligan, president of the Irish 2000 Festival, reports that there will be a "mini-music festival" at 7 PM on Thursday, June 12th at the Ancient Order of Hibernians Hall, 1748 State St, Schenectady NY. The concert features Greenwich Meantime, Who's Your Paddy, Flynn 529 and Mike DeAngelis and Rick Bedrosian from Hair of the Dog. Proceeds assist local AOH divisions to fund delegates to the 2008 National Convention in New Orleans. Tickets are \$20 and tables of ten are available by reservation by calling Bob Flaherty at 518-399-4950 (email is gelic46@aol.com) or Matt Nelligan at 518-729-4563 (i2000@hibernians.com).

✚ **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.

✚ **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.

✚ **The Bhoys Are Back** Area favorites the Glengarry Bhoys will be coming to Homer, NY, for an 8 pm show at the Center for the Arts' Whiting Theatre, on June 27 and 28. Tickets for the shows are \$20, with seniors paying \$16. There is no charge for children under 14 or students with I.D. The Center for the Arts is located at 72 South Main Street, Homer; just 30 minutes south of Syracuse, and 80 miles southwest of Utica. And, oh by the way, just to let you know that sometimes our crack research team actually does come through, we can now leak that the Center for the Arts also has a guy coming up in the fall, who...well, no. Let's just say we've mentioned his name already in this newsletter.

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

June 6	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
June 6-7	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
June 7	Celtic Butterfly Festival	Popp Butterfly Conservatory	Oneonta NY	12-6 PM	\$8.50; kids and seniors \$6.50
June 8	Cliudan	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
June 8	Matt & Shannon Heaton	Caffè Lena	Saratoga Springs	7 PM	\$15
June 12	Searson	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
June 13	Greenwich Meantime	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
June 12	AOH Mini-Music Festival	AOH Hall	Schenectady	7 PM	\$20
June 13	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
June 13	MacTalla Mor	Rome Art and Community Center	Rome	8 PM	Adults \$15; Seniors \$10; Students \$8 (less for members)
June 14	Broome County Irish Fest	Tipperary Hill	Binghamton	12-9 PM	\$10; under 12 free
June 14	Syracuse Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
June 15	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
June 15	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
June 20	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
June 20	Old Friends	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
June 21	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
June 22	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free

June 25	Hair of the Dog	Freedom Park	Scotia NY	7 PM	Free
June 26	Craobh Dugan Open Session	Café Domenico	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
June 26	Blarney Rebel Band, Irish Night at Saranac Thursday	F.X. Matt Brewery	Utica	5-8 PM	Free
June 27	Cliudan, w/ McDonald School of Irish Dance	Munson Williams Proctor Arts Institute Arts Festival	Utica	7 PM	Free
June 27	Flynn 529	Chipshots Restaurant and Sports Bar	Colonie, NY	7-10 PM	Free
June 27-28	Glengarry Bhoys	Center for the Arts	Homer, NY	8 PM	\$16 adults, \$12 Seniors
June 27-29	28th annual Old Songs Festival	Altamont Fairgrounds	Altamont, NY	10 AM - 11:30 PM	Varies – see site
June 28	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
June 28	The McKrells	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	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, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. And a trivia question for Flag Day, June 14th: Where is the only place the American flag is never lowered? Those answering correctly will receive a free subscription to this newsletter (oh, right) and a mention in next month's issue. Who knows, you may be added to our crack research team!