
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 4

Apr 2010

The 1916 Easter Rising

“All changed, changed utterly/A terrible beauty is born.”

We associate many things with Easter: bunnies, candy, spring, lilies, along with the obvious religious connotations. But rebellion? Well, you do if you're Irish. For it was shortly after noon on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, that Patrick Pearse stood on the steps of the General Post Office on O'Connell Street (then Sackville Street) and read to the hushed crowd the Proclamation of the Republic containing the following words:

We hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom,

Thus was launched one of the most glorious failures in history, the 1916 Easter Rising.

Led by schoolmaster Patrick Pearse, somewhere between 1200 and 1500 Irish Volunteers and 200 members of the Irish Citizen Army seized the Dublin General Post Office and other strategic positions throughout the capital and held out valiantly for five days against vastly superior forces, surrendering at the end but succeeding in spreading the Irish Republican concept to the general public, making a split from England not only possible, but inevitable.

Looking back on it now the rebellion was clearly doomed from the start. Much of the hopes of the leaders were pinned to two unlikely events, a major uprising by the Irish populace, and assistance, arms and manpower from Germany. In addition, few of the rebels had military experience, and this proved to be costly at sites like St. Stephen's Green, where the insurgents ill-advisedly dug trenches, despite being overlooked by high buildings, and were targeted and harassed by British sharpshooters. And finally, as is all too often the case in Irish history, disagreements among the various rebel factions reduced their forces to numbers far too few to successfully defend the positions they had taken.

Pearse issued orders in early April for three days of “parades and manoeuvres” by the Volunteers for Easter Sunday, knowing that they would understand what was meant by those orders. However, Irish Volunteer Chief of Staff Eoin MacNeill, who had been against the rising from the onset, issued a countermand to all Volunteers, canceling all actions for Sunday, when he learned that the ship carrying the promised weapons had been scuttled. This only succeeded in putting the rising off for a day, as the leaders went ahead with the rebellion, rescheduling it for Easter Monday, but it greatly reduced the number of Volunteers who turned out. The rebels had the advantage of the bank holiday, which meant many of the soldiers who ordinarily would have been guarding the key sites were off duty. As a result, the insurgents were able to occupy many of the positions they coveted with surprising ease.

The Volunteers' Dublin division was organized into four battalions, although as a result of the countermanding order all of them saw a far smaller turnout than originally planned. The 1st battalion, numbering about 250 men, was to occupy areas to the northwest to guard against attack from the west, while the 2nd battalion comprising about 200 men gathered at St. Stephen's Green with orders to take Jacob's Biscuit Factory and other sites in the area before heading to the GPO. Éamon de Valera's 130 men of the



3rd battalion were to take Boland's Bakery and a number of surrounding buildings to cover the main road and railway from the harbor at Dún Laoghaire. The 4th battalion, numbering about 100 men, was to occupy the workhouse known as the South Dublin Union to the southwest and defend against attack from the Curragh. Various other smaller units were dispatched to other sites, while the remainder was to occupy the General Post Office. This was the headquarters battalion, and included five members of the Military Council; Pearse, James Connolly, Thomas Clark, Seán Mac Dermott and Joseph Plunkett. The headquarters battalion, led by Connolly, charged the GPO, allowed the customers and staff to leave, and took a number of British soldiers prisoner. Two flags were hoisted on the flag poles on either end of the GPO roof: the tricolor and a green flag bearing the inscription "Irish Republic." A short time later, Pearse read the Proclamation of the Republic outside the GPO.



Despite being caught off guard, the British forces recovered quickly and began to exploit their tremendous advantage in manpower and firearms. A detachment of troops was sent to Sackville Street to investigate the situation at the GPO, troops were sent to relieve Dublin Castle and reinforcements were requested from nearby barracks and from England. As battles broke out throughout the various rebel-occupied sites during the week, the superior numbers and firepower of the British gradually took their toll on the Irish forces. City Hall was taken on Tuesday morning. The rebel position at St

Stephen's Green was made untenable after the British placed snipers and machine guns in the Shelbourne Hotel and surrounding buildings. Meanwhile, British field artillery pounded positions throughout the capital, reducing much of Dublin to rubble. On Wednesday the guns shelled Liberty Hall, and then began firing at rebel positions in O'Connell Street. Heavy fighting occurred at the rebel-held positions around the Grand Canal as British reinforcements advanced towards Dublin. While the Volunteers inflicted heavy losses on British troops trying to advance towards Dublin Castle, they were unable to stop the advance.

After days of shelling, the rebels at the GPO were forced to abandon their headquarters when fire caused by the shells spread throughout the building. They tunneled through the walls of the neighboring building and took up a new position, but on Saturday, April 29th, realizing that they could not break out of this position without further casualties, Pearse issued an order for all companies to surrender.

During the week of hostilities 500 people were killed and 2,500 wounded. Fifteen of the rebellion's leaders were tried and executed. Connolly was so seriously injured he had to be tied to a chair to be shot. Plunkett, who was also seriously ill, married his long-time companion, Grace Gifford, in jail just hours before his execution. It is said that she heard the shots as she walked away from the prison.



We read all the time that the rebellion was unpopular with the Irish people themselves until after the leaders were executed, but we must at all times remember that history is written by the victors. Recent accounts are emerging that cast serious doubt as to that claim, and it is clear that many of the citizens of Dublin supported the rising. Even among those who did not, however, these executions caused widespread disgust and outrage and, after the harsh measures taken against the insurgents, the Sinn Féin separatist movement began to eclipse the Irish Parliamentary Party, heralding the end of British power in Ireland.

Thousands Enjoy Utica's St. Patrick's Day Parade

Neither wind...nor brisk wind nor chilly wind nor "Enough already with the wind!" could stop the tens of thousands of Utica's Irish and Irish-for-a-day from enjoying another magnificent St. Patrick's Day Parade, on Saturday, March 13th. Led by Captain Richard Redmond and 150 members of the New York Army National Guard – many of whom have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan – and flanked by the not-quite-as-fit and not-quite-as-ready-to-take-orders 2010 Grand Marshal Frank Kealy, the parade featured over 160 units -- bands, floats, dancers, pipers, social and cultural groups, public servants, politicians and clowns (sorry, that phrase just typed itself) – all marching to the delight of kids of all ages. As always, the job of selecting the winning units was difficult, but the parade judges announced the following winners:

Bag Pipes

1. Mohawk Valley Frasers
2. Maloney Memorial Pipe Band
3. Broome County Pipe Band

Fire Departments

1. Maynard Volunteer
2. Clinton
3. New Hartford

High School Band

- Proctor High School Band
(okay, some categories were easier to pick than others)

Floats

1. Men's AOH/St. Patrick
2. Mohawk Ltd.
3. Steven-Swan Humane Society



Dancers

1. Johnston School of Irish Dance
2. Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance

Taverns

1. Shorty's
2. Black Cat
3. Celtic Harp

Marching Units

1. New York Army National Guard
2. Dogs of Ireland
3. New Hartford Legion Post 1376

Vehicles

1. Notre Dame HS Cheerleaders
2. Erie Canal Hog Chapter
3. Region L Lions Club Journey For Sight

Riverdance Bids the World Farewell

When it burst onto the scene in 1994 in the Point Theatre in Dublin, no one could have dreamed of the growth and enormous success of Riverdance, the "...thunderous celebration of Irish music, song and dance." Originally co-created by Irish American Michael Flatley as a 7-minute "interval act" for the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest, Riverdance was an immediate hit with millions of television viewers. Flatley, a brash young man who once held the Guinness World Record for 35 taps in a second (big deal, I drank a Guinness on tap in 35 seconds too...oh), and the lovely Jean Butler, continued their lead roles when a full-up show, composed by Bill Whelan, started its phenomenal run on February 9th, 1995 at the Point Theater.

Riverdance has played over 10,000 performances, and has been seen live by more than 22 million people in over 350 venues throughout 32 countries across 4 continents. They have traveled well over 600,000 miles, played to a worldwide television audience of nearly 2 billion; sold over 3 million copies of the Grammy Award-winning CD and over 10 million videos, making it one of the best-selling entertainment videos in the world.

Now, 15 years later, the producers of the show have announced that this will be Riverdance's final year, and Utica's magnificent Stanley Theater is one of the 20 venues in America that will see it off. For three days, April 6-8, the Stanley's expanded stage will host (some even number of) tapping feet, starting at 7:30 PM each night. Tickets for the show, which are available through the Stanley Theater website or box office, range from \$36.45 to \$65.55.

Book Review:
“The Insurrection in Dublin”
By Mark Sisti

“The Insurrection in Dublin,” James Stephens’ account of Dublin during the Easter Rising, is not a book for historians, political scientists or military tacticians. It will not tell you why the rebellion happened, and it will not tell you the details of how it happened. But what it will do better than any other account you can read is re-create the atmosphere in Dublin throughout the Easter week, because Stephens – a noted Irish author – relates the events surrounding the insurrection contemporaneously as he observes them happening. He presents these events in a real-time format, without the benefit (or disadvantage) of being able to go back and interpose knowledge learned later. The result is a mesmerizing first-hand account of this seminal period that is rarely read – but should be.

Stephens’ account follows a natural and logical progression that magnifies the feeling of being an actual participant in the events as they occurred. We get to perceive happenings in the same way the Dublin citizens perceived them. Stephens writes of going to bed Sunday thinking of learning to play the dulcimer, and “[o]n the morning following I awoke into full insurrection and bloody war, but I did not know anything about it.” As he walks the streets of Dublin he encounters nothing but questions and rumors. At the time, he has no facts, so he gives us none, but passes along rumors as he receives them. Such a practice may be bad journalism, but it makes for compelling storytelling. It is not until mid-afternoon that he notes, “it sank into my mind that what I had heard was true, and that the City was in insurrection. It had been promised for so long, and had been threatened for so long. Now it was here.” He is unable to learn anything concrete, as the only sources of information are the rumors flying everywhere and the equally untrustworthy reports from the British-controlled newspapers.

On the second day, he wakes with the expectation that the insurrection is finished, but he soon learns it is worse. Once again he attempts to sort through the rumors: “No English or country papers came. There was no delivery or collection of letters. All the shops in the City were shut. There was no traffic of any kind in the streets. There was no way of gathering any kind of information, and rumour gave all the news.” On this second day, however, the reality of the insurrection becomes inescapable, as he begins to observe both the battles and the bloody aftermath of the battles. Stephens affectionately notes that, while many of the women on the street assailed the Volunteers with cries of, “Would you be hurting the poor men,” in typical Irish fashion, an equal number were shouting, “Would you be hurting the poor horses?” and adds, “Indeed, the best people in the world live in Dublin.”

The natural progression of perception gives the essay its structure. On Monday, he heard stories of the insurrection; on Tuesday he witnessed its horror; on Wednesday it strikes close to home, as a close friend is killed. By this time he, and the other Dubliners, are able to separate the fact from the rumors, and there are more first-hand observations. Stephens writes after witnessing a particular severe shelling, “One’s heart melted at the idea that human beings were crouching inside that volcano of death, and I said to myself, “Not even a fly can be alive in that house.”

By the end of the week, Stephens is experiencing the weariness that most of the Dubliners must have feeling, an aspect of the rebellion rarely discussed. Hunger and looting are commonplace, and he writes powerfully of the terror of listening to the artillery guns at night. He describes a young woman scraping up the brains of a dead man so they can be buried with the corpse. But even amidst this horror, her reaction is, once again, typically Irish: “There is not,” said she, “a cat or a dog left alive in Camden Street. They are lying stiff out in the road and up on the roofs. There’s lots of women will be sorry for this war,” said she, “and their pets killed on them.”

As fascinating as his accounts of the actual insurrection are, equally captivating are his recollections of the leaders of the rebellion, many of whom he knew personally. His personal observations paint a clearer picture than would a full biography. He understands the incongruity of these schoolteachers, writers and scholars having to be the ones who led the rebellion, and writes, “It is mournful to think of men like these having to take charge of bloody and desolate work, and one can imagine them saying, ‘Oh! Cursed spite,’ as they accepted responsibility.”

In a flash of prescience, or perhaps just insight into human nature, Stephens wrote in his forward, written after some, but not all, of the leaders had been executed, “... the book is finished, and, so far as Ireland is immediately concerned, the insurrection is over. Action now lies with England, and on that action depends whether the Irish Insurrection is over or only suppressed.”

Craobh Dugan “Song of the Month” (sized to conveniently fit onto something the same size)

From our friends from Craobh Dugan, the Central NY branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, comes the next page for your ever-expanding session notebook. In keeping with our theme of “The Irish Rising,” new contributor Skip Mansur presents a most appropriate song: **The Foggy Dew**. Says Skip: “The words of this song were composed by Canon Charles O Neill, who was parish priest of Kilcoo, County Down, Northern Ireland, and later of Newcastle. In 1919 he went to Dublin and attended a sitting of the first Dail Eireann (Irish Parliament). He was moved by the number of members whose names were answered during roll call by "faoi ghlas ag na Gaill" (locked up by the foreigners) and resolved to write a song in commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising. The music belongs to an old love song, recorded in 1913 by John McCormack and the original manuscript of the words and music, in the possession of Kathleen Dallat of Ballycastle, names Carl Hardebeck as the arranger.

The Foggy Dew

Song: Canon Charles O'Neill, Arr. Carl Hardebeck

Em Em Am D D Em Bm ¹ Em ² Em *Slow Air*

G D Em Bm

Em Am D D Em Bm Em

*As down the glen one Easter morn to a city fair rode I
There Armed lines of marching men in squadrons passed me by
No pipe did hum, no battle drum did sound its loud tattoo
But the Angelus Bell o'er the Liffey's swell rang out through the foggy dew*

*Right proudly high over Dublin Town they hung out the flag of war
'Twas better to die 'neath an Irish sky than at Suvla or Sud-El-Bar
And from the plains of Royal Meath strong men came hurrying through
While Britannia's Huns, with their long range guns sailed in through the foggy dew*

*Oh the night fell black, and the rifles' crack made perfidious Albion reel
In the leaden rain, seven tongues of flame did shine o'er the lines of steel
By each shining blade a prayer was said, that to Ireland her sons be true
But when morning broke, still the war flag shook out its folds in the foggy dew*

*'Twas England bade our wild geese go, that "small nations might be free";
Their lonely graves are by Suvla's waves or the fringe of the great North Sea.
Oh, had they died by Pearse's side or fought with Cathal Brugha*
Their graves we'd keep where the Fenians sleep, 'neath the shroud of the foggy dew.*

*Oh the bravest fell, and the Requiem bell rang mournfully and clear
For those who died that Eastertide in the spring time of the year
And the world did gaze, in deep amaze, at those fearless men, but few,
Who bore the fight that freedom's light might shine through the foggy dew*

*As back through the glen I rode again and my heart with grief was sore
For I parted then with valiant men whom I never shall see more
But to and fro in my dreams I go and I kneel and pray for you,
For slavery fled, O glorious dead, when you fell in the foggy dew.*

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Syracuse's Westcott Theater Welcomes Enter the Haggis** On Friday April 9th, Toronto's **Enter the Haggis** comes back to the area, visiting Syracuse's Westcott Theater. A mainstay of the Great American Irish Festival, Enter the Haggis has built an international touring and recording career based on its unique approach to Celtic-based music and high-energy performances. The group's constant touring schedule has made them one of the biggest draws at Celtic and folk festivals throughout the world. The Westcott Theater – its canopy calls it simply “A theater and Performing Arts Center” -- is a 700 capacity venue, located at 524 Westcott St., about two miles from Syracuse University. Debuting in September 2008, the Westcott Theater is breathing new life into what began as The Harvard Theater, one of Syracuse's first cinemas, over 80 years ago. Doors open for the Enter the Haggis show at 8 PM, with the performance starting at 9 PM. Tickets, which are available on-line at <http://thewestcotttheater.frontgatetickets.com/>, range from \$12-15.
- ✚ **Gaelic Storm Comes to Revolution Hall** On Thursday, April 15th, Titanic's favorite steerage band, **Gaelic Storm**, comes to Revolution Hall in Troy, for a very special 7:00 PM show. Join Patrick Murphy (vocals, piano, accordion, spoons, harmonica), Steve Twigger (vocals, guitar, mandolin, bouzouki), Ryan Lacey (drums and world percussion), Pete Purvis (uilleann pipes, tin whistle, deger pipes and highland pipes) and Jessie Burns (fiddle) for a night you'll never forget. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$23 the day of the show. Revolution Hall is on 425 River Street in Troy.
- ✚ **Utica St. Patrick's Day Raffle** The winners of the raffle to benefit the 2010 St. Patrick's Parade were: 1st - Private Party for 25 at the 1888 Tavern FX Matt Brewery - Maureen Ruhm; 2nd - Two GAIF weekend gate passes, VIP passes and merchandise basket - Jeff Ball; 3rd - Two Riverdance tickets, limo service and dinner - Patricia Bick. Congratulations to you all!
- ✚ **“St. Baldrick's Day”** 470 people gathered at Kitty Hoynes on March 21st to shave their heads and raise money for The St. Baldrick's Foundation to fight childhood cancer. Over \$270,000 was raised, making theirs the nation's fourth largest event in terms of money raised. Notables shavees this year included Ellen Gooley, an 85-year old grandmother who was shorn in memory of her family; Kathleen “Keene” Sullivan-Burnham, a former Whitesboro resident who flew in from Wisconsin for the event, and “the Balladeer from the Southern Tier,” Pat Kane. Our hats – if not our hairs – are off to you all.
- ✚ **National Tartan Day** April 6 is National Tartan Day, the annual fundraiser event for the Cortland Celtic Festival. Held at Hairy Tony's Pub and Fare on Main St., Cortland from 5 to 9 PM, the event features great food, drink and music. Bring your fiddle, bagpipe or guitar and join the fun or wear your kilt and enter the knobby knees contest. Celtic Fiddler Kathy Selby will be there, along with piper Charlie Graves, and a special fiddle jam session starts at 8 PM. Admission is \$10, although anyone wearing a kilt gets in for \$5. For more info, check out the flyer on the back page.
- ✚ **Easter Rising Songs** Few events have inspired music more than those surrounding the Easter Rising of 1916. Whether intended as a call to arms, a fitting memorial, or merely the passing along of historical accounts in the age-old tradition of the seanache, songs arose throughout the land. Besides “The Foggy Dew” mentioned above, “Boys of the Old Brigade” commemorated all Republicans killed during and executed after the Easter Rising, while leaders like Pádraic Pearse and James Connolly had individual songs written about them. Perhaps the most poignant song/story to come from that fateful week was referenced in this issue's main article: the moving love story of Grace Evelyn Gifford and leader Joseph Plunkett, the man she married only hours before he was executed. The song “Grace,” which seems like it's been around forever, was written only 25 years ago by brothers Sean and Frank O'Meara. To hear probably the most well-known version, check out the Wolfe Tones' rendition, backing a slide show of the 1916 Easter Rising, [here](#).

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for April:

Apr 1	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 2	"Mostly Irish" Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Apr 2-3	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$14
Apr 4	Syracuse Irish Session	Wayside Irish Pub	Elbridge NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 5	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Apr 6	"Nail Creek Sessions"	Nail Creek Pub	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
Apr 6-8	Riverdance	Stanley Theater	Utica	7:30 PM	\$36.45-\$65.55
Apr 8	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 8	Tony Benn & Kevin McKrell	Revolution Hall	Troy	7 PM	\$10
Apr 9	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Apr 10	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Apr 10	Train of Fools	Caffè Lena	Saratoga Spa	8 PM	\$18, \$16 adv
Apr 10	Rakish Paddy	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9 PM	\$5
Apr 11	Donal O'Shaughnessy & Bryan Hyland	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 12	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Apr 15	Gaelic Storm	Revolution Hall	Troy	7 PM	\$23, \$20 adv.
Apr 15	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 16	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Apr 17	Blarney Rebel Band	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Apr 17	Forthlin Rd & Oran Mor Pipes	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9 PM	\$5
Apr 18	Cassidy-McCale	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 18	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 19	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Apr 20	Albany Street Sessions	Albany Street Café	Herkimer	7:30 PM	Free
Apr 21	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 23-24	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$14
Apr 24	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Apr 25	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 26	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Apr 29	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Apr 30	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free

If you have anything you want to share with us, feel free to send it to us (sistia@roadrunner.com, bloftis@gmail.com or marksisti@roadrunner.com), and we'll be happy to include it. As always, while we try to get things – prices, places, genders, etc. -- as accurate as we can, sometimes we make mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips. Finally, from our homes to yours, have a blessed and happy Easter!



CORTLAND CELTIC FESTIVAL
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER EVENT



Celebrate your
**Scottish
Heritage**
during our
Ceilidh Evening
of Great Music!

**NATIONAL
TARTAN DAY
APRIL 6, 2010**

\$10 admission
(\$5 if you are wearing a kilt!)

Celebrate Scotland signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320 which asserted Scotland's sovereignty over English territorial claims and inspired our own Independence Day in America!

Celtic Whiskey Seminar and Whiskey Sampling



The Glenlivet

DOWNSTAIRS AT
HAIRY TONY'S PUB & FARE
MAIN STREET CORTLAND

Featuring
internationally renowned
celtic fiddler
Kathy Selby
kathyselby.com

This event open to all
BAGPIPERS
wishing to come
down & participate!
email us to sign up!



Wear your kilt
and enter our
**Knobby Knees
Contest**

Concess - Photos
Haggis Tasting
Great Food & Drink

5-9 PM

FROM 8-9 pm



**Foot Stompin'
Fiddle Jam Session**

Everyone is invited to bring your instruments and join in the fun!
Fiddles, violins, flutes, penny whistles, harps, pipes, guitars!!
For more info or to sign up for the jam session go to..... cortlandycelticfestival.com