
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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29th Annual “East Durham Irish Festival” to be held

On May 27 and 28, the 2006 Celtic festival season unofficially gets under way, as the quaint little town of East Durham hosts its 29th 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).

The big news for 2006 is that “**The Sawdoctors** are back.” On Sunday, May 28, Ireland’s “...most exhilarating musical export,” the Sawdoctors will rock the festival grounds with their infectious tunes and fun. Also on the slate will be East Durham veterans **The Glengarry Bhoys** from Ontario, Canada, **Black 47** from N.Y.C., **Andy Cooney** and his band, and **Hair of the Dog**. Joining them will be **The Prodigals**, **Celtic Cross**, **The Kitty Kelly Band**, **Calley McGrane and the Exiles**, and **Shilelagh Law**; and, appearing at the festival for the first time will be **Searson** from Ontario, Canada, and the **Hunt Family Fiddlers** from Winchester, Virginia. Rounding out the lineup will be continuous entertainment by bagpipe bands, Irish Step Dancing groups, and some of the great Irish gift shops in the U.S.

Admission prices are \$12 for adults, \$10 for Irish Cultural Centre Members, and children under 12 are free. Parking is also free. For further information, visit <http://www.east-durham.org/memfestival/index06.htm> or call 1-800-434-FEST.

2006 Celebration of Celts

On Saturday May 6th, 2006, the gently rolling hills of eastern Columbia County, New York will echo with the history and culture of the seven nations of the Celtic World. Featuring everything from Pipe bands to Celtic Rock Bands, activities for the children, the Shetland Strings -- some of the world’s best young champion fiddlers -- and what promises to be “... the most unique piping event in the United States” -- a head-to-head piping competition called “Piping Outside the Box” -- this annual event is not to be missed. In addition to the varied activities above, there is an outstanding lineup of music, including sets by **Greenwich Mean Time**, **Coyote Run**, **Quagmyre**, **Hair of the Dog**, **Barley Juice** and **Enter the Haggis**. Finally, this year’s festival Grand Marshall is The Honorable Timothy O'Connor, Consul General of Ireland.



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. This event takes place at the Columbia County Fair Grounds in Chatham, NY; about 22 miles southeast of Albany. Tickets start at \$12, and the gates open at 10:00 AM. For more details, check out <http://www.celebrationofcelts.com/>, email celofcelts@mhcable.com or call (518) 851-9670.

(Friday, May 5, is the 25th anniversary of the date Bobby Sands died following his hunger strike. While we here at the Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events Newsletter try to avoid the pitfalls of political issues, occasionally there are events so significant and so universal in their application that they should not be forgotten. We believe this is one of them.)

BOBBY SANDS was born in 1954 in Rathcoole, a predominantly loyalist district of north Belfast. His family moved several times due to constant intimidation of Catholics by loyalists. On leaving school, he became an apprentice coach-builder, until he was forced out at gunpoint, again by loyalist intimidators. His early experiences led him inexorably to the Irish republican movement and he joined the Provisional Irish Republican Army in 1972.

Although often smeared as a “convicted IRA terrorist,” his only conviction was in fact for possession of a revolver, a crime for which he received fourteen years. In 1976 he was arrested with four others who were in a car containing a handgun. Charged in connection with an earlier bombing, he was held on remand for eleven months until his trial in September 1977. There was no evidence to link Bobby, or the others with him, to the bombing and those and other serious charges against him were dismissed, but he was convicted of possession of firearms and sentenced to 14 years’ imprisonment.

Like much of the Bobby Sands story, the goals of the hunger strike are often misunderstood today. There were no outrageous requests made, no insistence on total British withdrawal from Ireland, no demands that prisoners be freed. In retrospect, the actual demands made by the hunger strikers were remarkably innocuous and reasonable, and it is mind-boggling today to realize that the authorities refused to even consider them.

In March of 1976, an announcement had been made that republican prisoners would be stripped of their “special category” status and would from that point on be treated like ordinary prisoners. This set off a series of protests by republicans seeking to regain their previous status of political prisoners and not be subject to ordinary prison regulations. This was not an effort to lessen their hardship (although there is little dispute that the Irish Republican prisoners were treated abysmally) but was rather an answer to the British plan to paint those involved in the Irish fight for freedom as criminals in the eyes of the world. The hunger strike was the final desperate stage of these efforts against “criminalization.” The five specific demands over which the republicans were striking included:

1. The Right not to wear a prison uniform;
2. The Right not to do prison work; (they were willing to maintain their own portion of the prison grounds)
3. The Right of free association with other prisoners;
4. The Right to organize their own educational and recreational facilities;
5. The Right to one visit, one letter and one parcel per week

Bobby Sands began refusing food on March 1, 1981 and was followed by other prisoners at staggered intervals for maximum effect. The hunger strike received little publicity at first. Then came the turning point. Following the death of Frank Maguire, an independent nationalist MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Bobby Sands was put up for election. Other nationalist candidates withdrew giving Sands a clear run against the Unionist candidate, Harry West. Bobby Sands was duly elected by 30,492 votes to 29,046, on a massive turnout of 86.8%. Sands was by now forty days into his hunger strike. Many feel this election was highly significant in that it prompted the republican movement to move towards politics, and indirectly paved the way for the Good Friday Agreement and the success of Sinn Féin many years later.

Attempts to end the hunger strike, including a personal intervention from the Pope, proved fruitless. The British government, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, refused to accede to or even consider the demands. Spending his last few days on a water bed to protect his fragile bones, Bobby Sands died in the early hours of the morning, on May 5 1981, after 66 days on hunger strike, soon to be followed by nine other prisoners who died as a result of the hunger strike. Bobby Sands was 27 years old. The announcement of his death prompted several days of riots in nationalist areas of Northern Ireland. Over 100,000 people lined the route of his funeral.

While the hunger strike did not accomplish its immediate goals, it was a seminal event in modern Irish history, galvanizing nationalist politics and thrusting Sinn Féin to the forefront as a serious political force.

– Contributed by Mark Sisti

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

*“Rye bread will do you good.
Barley bread will do you no harm,
Wheaten bread will sweeten your blood,
Oaten bread will strengthen your arm.”*

This month, we’re revisiting a feature on tried and true recipes for meals, soups, breads, desserts and maybe even a potent potable or two. This month’s recipe: St. Brigid’s Oaten Bread. One of Ireland’s two patron saints, St. Brigid was so revered as a model for women of every age, that gentlemen, knights, and nobles began the custom of calling their sweethearts “Brides” - a custom that has come down to this very day (in fact, as the three editors of this newsletter are McBrides -- McBride meaning “son of the devotee of St Brigid” – you might look for a featured piece on St. Brigid in an upcoming issue). Anyway, it is said that St. Brigid comes to visit on her Feast Day (Feb 1, also known as Imbolc – See MVICE Vol 3, Issue 2; Feb 06), blessing people and livestock, bringing her white, red-eared cow with her. To welcome her, families leave an oaten cake and butter on the windowsill -- and corn for her cow.

St. Brigid’s Oaten Bread (submitted by Beth Loftis)

Ingredients:

1 cup flour
1 tablespoon sugar
3/4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons butter in small pieces
3/4 cup uncooked oatmeal flakes
1 egg
1/2 cup buttermilk

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Grease baking sheet.
3. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt in bowl and mix.
4. Add butter bits and cut in with knife until mixture is crumbly.
5. Add oats and toss to combine.
6. In other bowl beat egg with buttermilk.
7. Make a well in the dry ingredients. Pour in the egg mixture and mix with a fork until crumbs hold together. Make dough into ball and transfer to floured surface. Knead 20-25 times. Add flour if sticky.
8. Pat dough into 8-inch round and transfer to baking sheet.
9. Score a deep cross into the bread but do not cut it through (other recipes would have you also make herringbone-like scores to give the appearance of wheat).
10. Bake 15-20 minutes till brown (I’m assuming it means the bread, not the cook).

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@adelphia.net.

Blessed Beltane to You and Yours –liberally borrowed from several web sites

Beltane (also known as **Bealtaine** [Irish language] or **Bealltainn** [Scottish Gaelic]), is an ancient Gaelic holiday celebrated around May 1. The word Beltan in Wicca means “Fire in the sky.” Beltane, and its counterpart Samhain, divide the year into its two primary seasons: winter (Dark Part) and summer (Light Part). As Samhain is about honoring Death, Beltane, its counterpart, is about honoring Life. It is the time when the sun is fully released from his bondage of winter and able to rule over summer and life once again.

Beltane, like Samhain, is a time of “no time” when the veils between the two worlds are at their thinnest. No time is when the two worlds intermingle and unite and the magic abounds! It is the time when the Faeries return from their winter respite, carefree and full of faery mischief and faery delight. On the night before Beltane, in times past, folks would place rowan branches at their windows and doors for protection, many otherworldly occurrences could transpire during this time of “no time.” Traditionally on the Isle of Man, the youngest member of the family gathers primroses on the eve before Beltane and throws the flowers at the door of the home for protection.

Somewhat less mythical, Beltane is a cross-quarter day, marking the midpoint in the Sun's progress between the vernal equinox and summer solstice (two of the four minor Sabbats), which is traditionally considered to be May 1st; however, due to the change in the earth's axis of rotation over time, this point is now closer to May 5th, and some pagans observe May 5th as “Old Beltane,” but the traditional date of May 1st is still most widely favored. Traditionally, Beltane festivities marked the beginning of the pastoral summer season when the herds of livestock were driven out to summer pastures and mountain grazing lands. These festivities began days before May 1st, or “May Day,” when villagers traveled into the woods to gather the nine sacred woods needed to build the Beltane bonfires. The tradition of “May Boughing” or “May Birching” involved young men fastening garlands of greens and flowers on the windows and doors of their prospective ladyloves before the fires are lit Beltane night.

Random Ramblings

- ✚ **Irish Breakfast** Don't forget that on the first Sunday of every month from 8:00 to noon, the Riverside Diner offers an outstanding Traditional Irish Breakfast; consisting of two eggs, Irish bacon, Irish Sausage, Black and White Pudding, two kinds of Irish Soda bread, a Broiled Tomato, toast, and coffee or tea, all for the low price of \$5.95. The next one will be on **May 7th**. The Riverside Diner is located at 9663 Route 49 in Marcy.
- ✚ **Another Round** Canadian Celtic rockers Enter the Haggis will be the featured performer at the Earlville Opera House on 5 May. Tickets for the 8:00 show range from \$13 to \$20. The Earlville Opera House is located on Route 12B just 5 miles south of Hamilton, NY – home of Colgate University. If you need more information or want to be on their mailing list, send an [email](#), call (315) 691-3550 or write to them at PO Box 111, Earlville, NY 13332.
- ✚ **Night Eagle Cafe continues Open Irish Traditional Music Session** On Tuesday, May 9 at 8:00 pm, and again on the 23rd, the Night Eagle Café in Oxford, NY is offering the opportunity to enjoy an authentic Irish traditional session in an accessible, supportive, and welcoming setting. What is a Traditional Irish Session? Regular readers of this newsletter are quite familiar with the format (if not, go back into your archives and thumb through your old issues), but for newcomers, an Irish traditional music session is a relatively informal gathering of Irish traditional musicians where there are active participating musicians, listening musicians who are learning the repertoire, and, hopefully, an enthusiastic audience. The Night Eagle Cafe Irish Traditional Session will be hosted by **Anna Lisa Quinn** and admission is free.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, as promised, here's a look at some upcoming Irish Musical and Cultural events for May, suitable for posting:

May 5	Enter the Haggis	Earlville Opera House	Earlville	8:00 PM	\$13-20
May 5	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
May 5	Causeway Giants	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 6	Pat Kane and West O'Clare	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 6	Celebration of Celts	Columbia County Fair Grounds	Chatham	10-10 PM	\$12
May 7	The Blarney Rebel Band	O'Connor's Alexander Hamilton Inn	Clinton	4-7 PM	Free
May 7	Pat Kane and West O'Clare	Coleman's Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
May 9	Irish Session w/Anna Lisa Quinn	Night Eagle Cafe	Oxford	8:00 PM	Free
May 12	Vince Colgan	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
May 12	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 13	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 19	Dave Anthony	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 19	Blarney Rebel Band w/Irish Dancers	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:00 PM	Free
May 20	Gerry Dixon and Seanache	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 21	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
May 23	Irish Session w/Anna Lisa Quinn	Night Eagle Cafe	Oxford	8:00 PM	Free
May 26	Old Friends	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 26	Gerry Dixon and Seanache	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
May 27	Bill Craig	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
May 27-8	East Durham Irish Festival	Michael J. Quill Cultural and Sports Centre	East Durham	11-11 Sat 10-11 Sun	\$12

That does it for May. As we leave, let us remind you that this newsletter is also available online at www.greatamericanirishfestival.com. Just click on the "Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events" button, directly under the "Countdown Clock." If you have anything you want to include in upcoming newsletters, PLEASE feel free to contact us at sistia@rl.af.mil, bloftis@adelphia.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. We would be especially appreciative to hear from anyone who wants to submit a review of any the events we've promoted. Until next month, Blessed Beltane to you and yours!