
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 11

November 2010

Battlefield Band Comes to Caffè Lena

Caffè Lena, recognized as the oldest continuously operating coffeehouse in the United States, celebrates their 50th anniversary by bringing in one of Scotch-Irish music's most enduring acts, **Battlefield Band**, on Thursday, November 11th at 7:30 PM. "The Batties," as they are fondly known, were formed in the late '60s by four student friends; fusing ancient traditional musical instruments with synthesizers and other keyboards, and have continued playing with the same passion and joy ever since. Founder Alan Reid has assembled what many are calling the best lineup ever -- most of whom weren't even born when the band gained its initial following -- to pick up the mantle of going "Forward With Scotland's Past." Today, after 30 years, they still lead the way for Scottish music, being awarded the first Best Live Act by the first annual Scots Trad Music Awards in 2003. This tour is a bittersweet one for longtime fans as founding member Reid, keyboardist for the ensemble's entire 30 year history, will be leaving Battlefield Band at the end of 2010. Make plans to come to the Caffè Lena and see the band that led one reviewer to say "What the internationally renowned Irish band, the Chieftains, has done for traditional Irish music, Battlefield Band is doing for the music of Scotland ...". Tickets are \$22 in advance, \$24 at the door. Caffè Lena is located at 47 Phila Street in Saratoga Springs.



Rare US Tour Brings Mary Black to The Egg

Marking her first US tour in three years, Ireland's Mary Black will be appearing at the Egg in Albany on November 7th to perform selections from her compilation CD, "25 Years, 25 Songs," featuring re-mastered material and new songs. A legend in Ireland as part of the famed musical Black family, she began singing traditional Irish music at age 8, and her career has grown ever since; including countless "best female vocalist" awards, and recognition from the Irish Post, who conferred upon her a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006. Tickets for the 7:30 show are \$29.50, and are available on-line at the Egg's web site or by calling (518) 473-1845. Singer/songwriter Roisin O opens the show. Make plans to catch this rare US concert, and hear the artist about whom one critic wrote: "Mary Black has come to define what many people see as the essence of Irish woman singers: profound, slightly ethereal and beyond the reaches of trends."



The Egg is located in the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

Enter the Haggis Returns to the Area

On November 26th, Toronto's Enter the Haggis returns to one of their favorite haunt's, Syracuse's Westcott Theater (524 Westcott St) for an 8 PM show on the theater's unique slanted dance floor. Tickets for the show are \$12 in advance ([here](#)) and \$15 at the door. Opening the show will be Sirsy, the "fiery, sultry, soulful, indie pop rock duo," fronted by singer/flautist/drummer Melanie Kraemer and multi-instrumentalist Rich Libutti. For more information, call (315) 299-8886.

Parting Glass Brings in Derek Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones

In the world of Irish music, there is perhaps no name that resonates like that of Derek Warfield. Historian, singer, songwriter, and author, Derek is best known as a founding member and front man of one of the truly legendary bands in the history of Irish music, the Wolfe Tones.

An outstanding singer, stage personality, composer of songs and historian of the song tradition, Warfield is bringing his new band Derek Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones to the Parting Glass in Saratoga Springs, on November 19th. The band (which we got to see at the last two Great American Irish Festivals) features a melding of one of the great voices in Irish music with some of the finest Irish musicians from a younger generation: singer-songwriter Padraig Allen, banjo/mandolin player Damaris Woods and accordion and bodhran player Jim Woods. Tickets for the 9 PM show are \$15, and reservations are highly recommended.



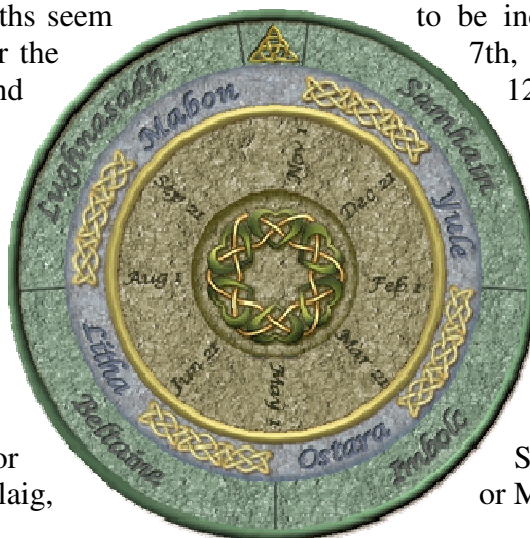
Taking the Celtic Calendar One Day at a Time – Contributed by Tom Malley

Does trying to make sense of the Celtic calendar leave you weak and in a daze? If so, you're not alone. Let's look at the calendar; specifically the days and months.

The day names we use originated in ancient Rome when they were named for celestial bodies: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. As you see the last five were also deities. Over time, the names of Germanic gods supplanted the Roman versions. These were Tiu, god of war; Woden, similar to Mercury; Thor, similar to Jupiter; Frigg, the goddess of love. Somehow, Saturn kept his day. Four of the Irish day names are based on Christianity, while the other three retain their Roman roots. Sunday is Dé Domhnaigh, the Lord's day, Wednesday is Dé Céadaoin, first fast day, Thursday is Dé Ardaoin, the high fast day, and Friday Dé hAoine, the fast day. Remember Friday fish day? Monday -- Dé Luain or Moon day, Tuesday -- Dé Máirt or Mars day, and Saturday -- Dé Sathairn or Saturn day, maintained their old Roman origin.

We use the Julian Gregorian calendar for our months. The origin for some month names is disputed. It appears that four months are named for deities: January (Janus), March (Mars - he must have had clout, he had both a day and a month named for him), May (Maia) and June (Juno). The calendar originally had 10 months, but when Julius Caesar redid the calendar, he added a month named for himself, as did his nephew Augustus. That's why the last four months seem to be incorrectly named September, October, November and December (for the 7th, 8th 9th and 10th months), when they are actually 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th.

The first four Irish months Eanáir, Feabhra, Márta, and Aibreann are said to derive from which apparently started summer, and eventually holds his place with Iúil, named for Lugh the Long mid harvest, and October is November is named for Nov 1, and December is Nollaig,



derive from their Roman roots, Aibreann. May is Bealtaine, which "bright fire." June is Meitheamh, out as "mean samhraidh," or mid contracted to its current form. Julius for July. August is Lughnasa, armed. September is MeánFómhair, Deireadh Fómhair, end of harvest. Samhain, the Celtic New Year, which is or Mi naNollaig, month of Christmas.

Book Review:
“Venetia Kelly’s Traveling Show”
By Mark Sisti

Master storyteller Frank Delaney is back, bringing us a compelling view of love, family, Irish politics and the power of myth with his latest novel, “Venetia Kelly’s Traveling Show.”

As the story begins, momentous changes are underway for both the narrator, young Ben McCarthy, and for Ireland. In the midst of the political and social turmoil as Ireland prepares for the momentous 1932 election, Ben's solid and dependable father abandons the family farm to join a traveling theater troupe. Despite his youth, Ben's mother sends him off to bring his father home, and thus begins his journey, a journey that takes him to places unimagined, both figuratively and geographically. Along the way he meets the people who will shape his future, including actress Sara Kelly, the couple who will become his guides throughout life, the various members of the traveling show, and, eclipsing them all, the beautiful Venetia Kelly, the same young actress who entranced his father. Always lurking on the fringes is Venetia’s grandfather King Kelly, who gives the initial impression of being merely an untrustworthy rogue, but reveals himself to be something much more dangerous.

A common comment you’ll find in these reviews is that a character comes off as “real.” This is not the case with some of the characters in this story. While Ben and his parents are very realistically portrayed, most of the denizens of the road show are not, and that’s quite deliberate. These colorful characters are larger than life and Delaney means for them to be perceived that way. King Kelly is, appropriately enough, a dastardly villain direct from an old melodrama. Sara Kelly is an actress who is never off stage. Venetia, in particular, has an air of mythic unreality about her; even her birth is described as being almost supernatural, as we are told she “... sprang from the womb and waved to the crowd. Then she smiled and took a bow.”

We get nothing but peripheral glimpses of her throughout the first half of the book, never hearing of anything she says directly, rather hearing second-hand accounts of her reciting someone else’s words, or filtering her words through her ventriloquist’s dummy. The first appearance of Venetia – over 200 pages into the book – shows a face covered with a cream that hides her features and prevents her from speaking. This deliberate withholding of the main character – Hamlet without Hamlet – has the effect of heightening the mythic proportions Delaney tries to ascribe to her. It’s also appropriate because this is the story of the narrator, Ben, more than it is the story of Venetia. It is coming-of-age at its finest. In the beginning, Ben has the typical ego-centricity of the young. He doesn’t see his parents as people, they exist only as “his parents;” their names aren’t even mentioned until halfway through the novel. By the end of the novel, Ben, like the fledgling Irish nation, has taken steps down the road to maturity and has become a fully-functioning adult capable of holding his own against some very strong personalities. The contrasts between the world that Ben has grown up in and the world that Venetia inhabits are obvious and, to Delaney, they clearly represent the various factions who are striving to steer Ireland’s course.

Delaney, as seen in his previous work, is fascinated by words – which he explores often in his “diversions” – and by the concept of life as mythology and vice versa. One character sets Ben on the right road by retelling his story as an old legend, and most of the book is imbued with an almost fairy tale quality. And like the best fairy tales, the story is so bewitching and charming that you – like Ben – barely notice as it gets progressively darker. This is a complex, multi-layered novel, made even more so by the deliberate pacing and the deceptive simplicity with which it is told.

As a slight aside, I have fairly strict rules about what books I listen to as audio books and what books I choose to physically read. Generally, if it’s a book that’s chiefly plot-driven I don’t mind listening to it, but if it’s a book where the writing is of a higher caliber, like Delaney’s, I prefer to turn the pages and get fully immersed in the pure beauty of the language. This one is different; I did both with this book -- read and listened -- and would heartily recommend the CD version, read by the author. Delaney is not just a fine writer, he’s a brilliant speaker, with a precise command of dynamics, subtle vocal nuances to differentiate characters and a manner that makes it seem like the words are coming to him as he speaks them, rather than reading them off a page.

Craobh Dugan “Tune of the Month” – Harvest Home/Boys of Bluehill - by Skip Mansur

November already! Nights are getting chilly, a few flakes have been sighted, leaves are almost gone and apple cider is hot (or cool) off the presses. The fields that were once lush and green this summer have now turned to shades of straw and gold and in most cases are bare with a few deer wandering about perusing the remains in the evening. Fall is in the air and the Harvest is Home... say, now there’s a great name for a tune...

“Harvest Home” is a hornpipe from the British Isles and New England, the earliest versions in America date to the 1840s and it appears in a music manuscript from painter and fiddler William Sydney Mount (1807-1868, “*The Power of Music*,” 1847. *The Fiddlers Companion* states: In parts of the British Isles a ‘Harvest Home’ was synonymous with a community dance, similar to what New Englanders might call a ‘Kitchen Junket.’ Kieth Chandler, in his essay “Musicians in 19th Century Southern England” (General Introduction, part 3), finds reference to such an event in a private house at Swalcliffe Park, Oxfordshire, the residence of Henry Norris, probably in the late 19th century:

...At the end of the summer, when the hay and the harvest had been gathered in, Mr. Norris gave a ‘Harvest Home’ to the people he employed...The dancing was in the courtyard of the house, on the clean stone floor and a local fiddler supplied the music on his fiddle...At Christmas there was sometimes a dance in the kitchen. A story goes, that on one occasion when the room was very full, the little old fiddler was hoisted on to the dresser where a chair had been placed, to put him out of the way...

The Boys of Bluehill

Hornpipe
D (GD)

Harvest Home

Hornpipe
D (GD)

“Harvest Home” is often played with “The Boys of Bluehill” in Irish seisuns; in fact we often play the two together as a set, sometimes with “Off to California” leading it off. The “Boys” is another hornpipe, also dating back to a printing (then called “The Two Sisters”) in Knauff’s *Virginia Reels* (1839). This tune appears to be older in American tradition than Irish and possibly travelled from America back to Ireland. Chief O’Neill of Chicago collected the tune from a seventeen year old fiddler named George West, who apparently learned it from a strolling fiddler named O’Brien. As noted in the *Fiddler’s Companion*, “George West, though gifted musically, was somewhat indigent and did not own a fiddle. He had formed a symbiotic musical relationship of sorts with one O’Malley, who did own a fiddle and who eked out a meagre living playing house parties despite the loss of a finger from his left hand. O’Malley, however, invariably could only make it to midnight before he became too inebriated to bow, at which time West took over his fiddle and finished the night’s engagement. ‘Thus lived the careless, improvident but talented Georgie, until an incident in his life rendered a trip to the far West advisable.’ ” (Off to California...? We’ll consider that tune another time...)

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

This month's recipe – “Pea and Ham Soup” This basic dish is easily made but tastes wonderful and is greatly welcomed on a cold winter's day.

INGREDIENTS:

1 oz butter	6 oz frozen peas
1 onion, chopped	4 oz cooked ham, diced
1 pint vegetable stock	1 tablespoon fresh chopped parsley
4 fl oz milk	Salt and pepper
8 oz cooked potatoes, diced	1 tablespoon single cream (optional)

METHOD:

Melt half the butter and sauté the onion in a saucepan until soft but not browned. Add the stock and milk and bring to the boil. Add potato and peas reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes until the peas are tender and the potato starts to fall apart. Puree in a blender then return to the heat and stir in the ham and parsley. Season with the salt and pepper. Stir in the cream if desired. Heat through.

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@gmail.com.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

✠ **“Nuacht as Craobh Dugan”---news from the Dugan Branch** Chris Hoke of Craobh Dugan reports: “Craobh Dugan held their Annual General Meeting in October. The following officers were elected for the 2010-2011 year: Chris Hoke--Chairperson; Tom Malley--Vice-Chair and Language Officer; Mike Hoke--Treasurer; Sarah Swann--Secretary and Youth Officer; Ed Campbell---Public Relations Officer; and Pat Dugan--Auditor. Anyone interested in joining our local Comhaltas branch can contact any of the officers or check out our website: www.uticairish.org. Our musicians get together weekly to play and share tunes...new musicians are always welcome! Craobh Dugan now hosts two monthly music sessions. The 1st Tuesday of the month a session is held at the Nail Creek Pub on Varick St. in Utica. Another session is held on the 3rd Wednesday at The Mill on Dominick St in Rome. Both sessions begin at 7:30...come to play with us or just to listen. It is a great taste of Ireland right here at home! We also offer weekly ceili dance classes. These are held on Friday evenings at the Seton Center at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Utica. Classes start at 7:00...it is a lot of fun and great exercise..it costs nothing, you do not need special shoes and you do not need a partner! So you have no excuse for not joining us on Fridays. Check the website for contact information. And...if you are interested in learning to speak Gaelic, we can help you with that too! We have two people who teach Irish Gaelic, Pat Dugan and Tom Malley. Information is also on the website.... www.uticairish.org Slainte!”

✠ **...and in a related note of our own** The Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Northeast Regional Meeting and Hall of Fame Inductions will be held in Buffalo on November 6th, and our own Tom Malley from Craobh Dugan will be one of the inductees this year. Tom has been actively involved in the local Comhaltas branch for many years, serving in various capacities. He has been a teacher of the Gaelic language and ceili dancing for many years. With his induction, Tom joins Craobh Dugan colleagues Mike and Chris Hoke (2007), Jim O’Looney (2006), Kate (McDonough) Hill (2003), Tom Carville (2000) and most recently, Kevin Kearney (2008). This is a well-deserved honor for Tom, and we would like to offer him our most sincere congratulations... Go maire tú an lá! (How’d we do, Tom?)

❁ **Coming in December...** One of the perks of subscribing to this newsletter is that once in a while you'll get news of an upcoming event before most of the public gets wind of it. This month, we have two such events. On December 9th, one the area's favorite bands, **Enter the Haggis**, will be coming back to Utica for a very special show at the Electric Company on Varick Street. Marking a triumphant return to the place that hosted them last March, the boys will be bringing their trademark high energy show back "home," and if it's anything like their last appearance at EC, you'd better get there early. Showtime is 9 PM, and tickets are \$15. Look for more details in next month's newsletter... And then on December 18th, in the first appearance in the area since their explosive sets at this year's Great American Irish Festival, Canadian powerhouse **Leahy** will be gracing the stage at the Oneida High School auditorium, as part of the 2010 Oneida Area Arts Council season. If you haven't heard them, Leahy is family of eight musical brothers and sisters who have been playing together their entire lives. They are instrumentalists, singers and dancers who bring a rare level of originality and musicianship to the stage (and if you haven't heard them, that would explain why you aren't as excited as we are to be even announcing this!). Tickets for the 7:30 performance of The Leahy Family Christmas Show are \$25, and are available online or by calling (315) 363-7064. More details will be coming in the December issue... but why wait?

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

Nov 2	"Nail Creek Sessions"	Nail Creek Pub	Utica	7:30-10 PM	Free
Nov 4	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 5	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 5	April Verch Band	Proctor's Theater	Schenectady	7:30	\$22
Nov 5	"Mostly Irish" Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Nov 6	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 6	MacTalla Mor	Center for the Arts	Homer, NY	8 PM	\$10-\$20
Nov 7	Mary Black	The Egg	Albany	7:30 PM	\$29.50
Nov 7	Donal O'Shaughnessey	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 8	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Nov 11	Battlefield Band	Caffè Lena	Saratoga Springs	7:30 PM	\$22 adv, \$24 door
Nov 11	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 12-13	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Nov 13	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Nov 14	Blarney Rebel Band	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 15	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Nov 17	Traditional Irish Session	The Mill	Rome, NY	7:30 PM	Free
Nov 17	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 19	Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfetones	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9 PM	\$15, res. req'd
Nov 21	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 21	Kitchen Party	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 22	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Nov 25	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 26	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Nov 26	Enter the Haggis w/Sirsy	Westcott Theater	Syracuse	7 PM	\$12-\$15
Nov 27	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9 PM	\$13, res. req'd
Nov 27	Trad Irish Music Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Nov 28	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Nov 29	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free

If you have anything you want to share with us, feel free to send it to us (sistia@roadrunner.com, bloftis@ymail.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, Mark, Beth and I want to wish you all a great Thanksgiving. Secondly, remember to vote on Election Day – it is both a right and a privilege of democracy. Finally, and I believe, most importantly, be sure to remember that November 11th is Veterans' Day... the day we pay tribute to the brave men and women who fought, and in many cases died, to preserve, defend and protect the rights that our forebears carved out for all of us. We may have vastly different ideological notions about the causes of, or even need for, wars... but whatever our views, we must never, ever forget those brave souls who risked everything for the freedom we ALL enjoy.