
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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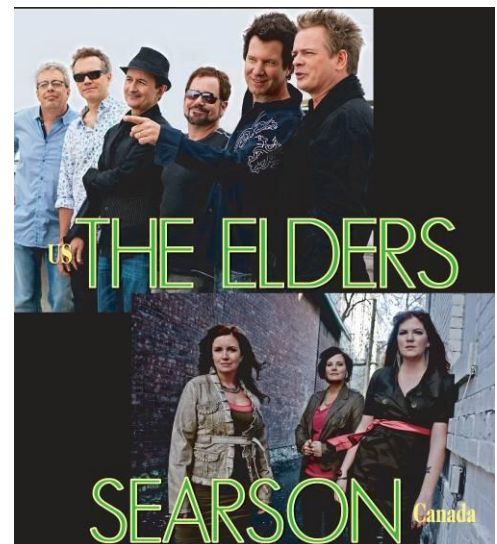
January: One of the Twelve “Most Irish Months” of the Year

January in Central New York is known for three things: the end of three months of Christmas carols, being the statistically coldest month of the winter, and... great Irish parties?? You heard correctly; and it makes perfect sense. Embodying the two-faced god Janus for which the month was named, Central New Yorkers looking ahead for a good Irish party note that St. Patrick’s Day is too far away; and looking behind, well, the fabulous Irish festival season is now little more than a fading memory. What’s a passive Irishman to do? I wouldn’t know; I’ll let you know if I locate one. What I do know is that, this month, there are three very good reasons to leave the comforts of a warm house and treat yourself to some great music, good times, conversation with someone other than your cat, and even some wintry-cold libations. January in Central New York? It’s one of the most Irish months of the year!

Elders, Searson Set to Rock the Capitol

What do you get when you bring together six dynamic guys from a band in the heartland of the United States with (at least) three beautiful and talented ladies from north of the border? Want a hint? Okay, you saw them this past summer – that is, of course, if not all of your memories of the fabulous Irish festival season have faded – as individual acts, and then together, at both the Great American Irish Festival and the Syracuse Guinness Irish Festival. Need another hint? Geez, look at the picture, Einstein. That’s right; of course we’re talking about **The Elders**, and their Ireland tourmates, **Searson**.

On January 28th, 2012, Central New York’s favorite sons, The Elders, make their annual pilgrimage to the Historic Capitol Theatre in Rome for a very special 7 PM show to help raise funds in support of Rome’s Weed and Seed program. This will mark their fifth consecutive appearance for the cause, and this time, they’ll be joined by the hugely popular Canadian band, Searson.



Fronted by Ian Byrne from County Wicklow, and backed by guitarist Steve Phillips, bassist Norm Dahlor, violinist Brent Hoad, drummer Tommy Sutherland, and keyboardist Joe Miquelon, the Elders have set the American music scene on its ear, thanks to a skillful mix of amped-up roots rock, augmented with powerful vocals, blazing instrumentals and topnotch song writing; burrowing their way into the hearts of Central New Yorkers as well. Searson is no stranger to the area either – I first caught them in 2004 when GAIF’s inaugural “wine-tasting field trip” (uh, we’re due for a second one!) parked the bus at Kitty Hoynes in Syracuse -- and as growing throngs of fans can attest, the top-notch musicianship and high-energy dancing of Erin, Colleen and Heather Searson will have you up on your feet and screaming for more. Tickets for the concert are available online at www.romecapitol.com, at the Rome Capitol Box Office, or at the Celtic Harp on Varick Street in Utica. General admission tickets are \$25 in advance or \$35 at the door. For more information please visit www.romeweandseed.com or contact Kathy Stockbridge, Weed & Seed Site Coordinator at (315) 838-1713 or kstockbridge@romecitygov.com. The Capitol Theatre is located at 220 West Dominick St. in Rome.

Westcott Theater Welcomes The Elders

In the relatively short time since its rebirth in 2008, Syracuse's Westcott Theater has made a concerted effort to attract some of the country's most celebrated Celtic acts, so far including Great Big Sea, Black 47, Enter the Haggis and the Young Dubliners... and now they can add one of the hottest Irish bands in the world to the list: The Elders. On Friday, January 27th, the band that lives up to its motto "arse-kickin' music from the heartland" rolls into the salt city for a special 8 PM show (doors open at 7, which should give you enough time to learn how to negotiate the unique slanted floor). If you've never seen the Elders, we've already introduced the boys to you in the article above, but as it turns out, words don't come close to describing the Elders in concert... they have to be seen. And as they lit up the Guinness Irish Festival last September, it's a sure bet that Syracuse fans will be out in droves for this performance, which is sure to feature cuts from their latest CD, "Wanderin' Life and Times" (including the emotional soldiers' anthem, "Please Come Home," which blew everyone away at the Syracuse festival). Tickets for the show are \$15. The Westcott Theater is located at 524 Westcott Street.



"Halfway to the Great American Irish Festival Hooley" Slated for January 29

The Great American Irish Festival committee is hosting a "Halfway to GAIF Hooley" event on Sunday, January 29th, from 2:00 to 6:00 PM, at Harts Hill Inn in Whitesboro. This party – a well-deserved respite from winter weather, Christmas shopping and fruitcakes – will serve several purposes (like we need more than one?). First and foremost, it is an opportunity for the festival leadership and committee to express their sincere thanks to the many volunteers, sponsors and other festival supporters...but it will be more than that. As it is six months prior to the next festival, it will provide the perfect opportunity to announce the headline performers for 2012 festival. And if those weren't enough reasons to attend, with the GAIF now being in charge of the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Hooley – being the largest collection of Irishmen in Utica since July's festival and until the March 17th parade – is the perfect venue for the announcement of the selection of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal. There will be a complimentary buffet and beer (with a cash bar for other potables), and topping it all off, the party features musical entertainment; with the fabulous **Searson** and opening act, the area's own **Blarney Rebel Band**. How could this be any better? How about... inviting the general public! That's right, any day now, a limited number of \$25 tickets will be made available for sale to the public, at the Utica Club Brewery Shop and the Celtic Harp. (volunteers only pay \$10; another perk of volunteering). Other venues may be announced soon...check back at the GAIF web site for announcements. Remember, being invited (as all our volunteers are) is not enough. In order to plan for food and to let planners know how many tickets can be made available to the public, it is essential that you contact event coordinator Kate Barefoot, at kfbare@yahoo.com to let her know your intent. If you do not call, it's entirely possible that you may end up outside looking in.



W-wait! I Wanna Be A GAIF Volunteer Now Too!

I don't blame you; sounds like a good party, doesn't it? Okay, so maybe you can't go back in time and volunteer for the 2011 festival... but what about 2012? GAIF Volunteer Chairperson Claudette Johnson wanted us to remind you that the festival still needs volunteers for the 2012 festival, and that the Volunteer portion of the GAIF [web site](#) will be open soon, and you can also sign up at the Halfway to GAIF Hooley... well, that is if you're able to get in. By the way, even veterans of the volunteer army need to sign up again.

Nominations Sought for 2012 St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshal

Organizers of the Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade are again giving the public a chance to be heard in deciding who will be the 2012 Parade Grand Marshal. Suggestions are now being sought for worthy grand marshal candidates for the parade, which will take place on March 17, 2012. The Grand Marshal, who will also serve as the honorary chairperson of the 2012 Great American Irish Festival, will be selected from your nomination letters, which can either be sent to St. Patrick's Day Parade, PO Box 36, Utica, NY 13503, or they can be e-mailed to assistant-director@gaif.us. Nomination letters should provide a brief background of the nominee and detail his or her contribution to Irish causes in the Mohawk Valley, citing the reasons why the nominee would be the proper choice for Grand Marshal. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 10, 2012.

"We like to get input from everyone out there because it's impossible for us to be aware of every possible candidate," said Parade Director Judy Weeks. "The main consideration is how they've contributed to the local Irish community." The Grand Marshal will be announced on Jan. 29, 2012 at the Halfway to Great American Irish Festival Hooley, to be held at Hart's Hill Inn in Whitesboro. The Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade is presented by the Great American Irish Festival, with the cooperation of the City of Utica.

Vishtën Invites You To An Acadian "Kitchen Party"

Four ten years, the members of Vishtën have been touring their brand of new-traditional Acadian music in over 1000 performances rendered in eight different countries. Vishtën -- the name is taken from an old French-Micmac folksong -- is Pastelle LeBlanc (Accordion, Piano, Dance and Voice), twin sister Emmanuelle LeBlanc (Bodhran, Piano, Whistles, Dance, Voice) and Pascal Miousse (Fiddle, Mandolin, Guitar, Voice), and they'll be bringing their unique "kitchen party" atmosphere to the Old Songs Concert Series in Voorheesville, on Friday, January 6th. Described as "Buckwheat Zydeco meets the Irish," Vishtën has become a distinctive and powerful international voice for traditional music. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$23 for adults, and \$5 for children 12 and under. Old Songs is located at 37 Main St. in Voorheesville.

"All Irish Night" Commemorative Concert at the Kirkland Art Center

In celebration of its 30th Anniversary, the Kirkland Art Center (KAC) Coffeehouse series is starting this year with a show that commemorates the very first coffeehouse that started the ball rolling, an all local Irish coffeehouse, Friday, January 13 at 8 p.m.

Thirty years ago, the art center in Clinton presented a concert featuring An Craobhin Ceolmhar, the local chapter of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (an international organization to preserve the Irish culture), a group of Irish dancers and Irish balladeer Vincent Colgan. "The show sold out and many had to be turned away that night, but it was apparent to all that there was an audience for folk music, and that's how the series started," said Ginger Parker, who founded the series and continues, as a volunteer, to coordinate it.

This show will again feature the Comhaltas group, now called "Craobh Dugan," Irish dancers, and "Rattlin' Bog;" five local musicians with over 25 years of performance experience (pictured here at the Great American Irish Festival are John Brett, Mike Carroll, Dan Sargent, Joe Rowlands and Rick Kincaid). And as many of you know, Vincent suffered a stroke over the summer, but he will be there to perform a few songs that night, accompanied



by two of his daughters. Tickets are \$15 (\$12 for KAC members) and can be purchased after the first of the year at the KAC in person or by phone (315) 853-8871, or on line at any time at www.kirklandartcenter.org.

Book Review:
“The Forgotten Waltz”
By Mark Sisti

Make no mistake about it, Anne Enright is a gifted writer. Every word in “The Forgotten Waltz” is near-perfect, every idea perfectly stated, every paragraph perfectly crafted. So why did it leave me so cold and unsatisfied?

Set in a Dublin suburb, “The Forgotten Waltz” relates thirty-something Gina Moynihan’s reflections on an extended love affair with Sean, a married man she meets at her sister’s dinner party. Complicating the affair is Sean’s young daughter Evie, an odd child, to whom Gina is curiously drawn. Despite a seemingly happy marriage to a man who “in all the time I knew him, he never did a cruel thing,” despite a fulfilling career and a close family, Gina is at that time of her life where she is unsure of what she wants or, in fact, what she is. She describes envisioning how she would furnish an apartment and, while she can picture the chair she would place against the wall, “I didn’t know what my life would be like in that chair, or how I would feel about it. Better, no doubt. I was sure I would feel serious-yet-playful, grown-up and happy; I would be somehow fulfilled.” This aimlessness contributes to her decision – if it can be called that – to have an affair. But her comment also reflects the feeling so pervasive during the Celtic Tiger economy of the ‘90’s, the idea that property ownership would make everything right. The affair begins around the start of the economic boom and continues into the ensuing downturn, and points out the dichotomy between the blind optimism of those who acted as if the good times would last forever, and the reality of what eventually transpired. The symbolism is not exactly subtle.

As she did in “The Gathering,” Enright uses the vagaries of memory to her advantage. We don’t necessarily remember the facts of a story in proper linear order, or even correctly; we impose current knowledge and current sensitivities on our memories of past events, making those memories notoriously unreliable. Enright understands this, and she uses that understanding to great effect, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to obscure.

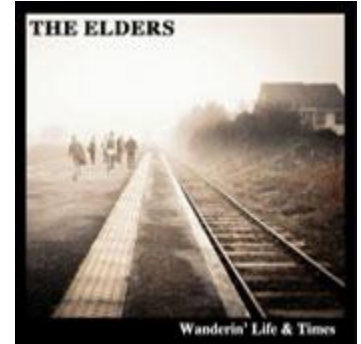
Without getting into spoilers, this is not a morality play, where betrayal leads to remorse, regret and punishment. Nor is it a Lifetime Channel romance, where love and passion conquer all. It is, of course, about love, but it is about the unrealistic expectations we place on love; each chapter opens with the title of a love song extolling an idealized concept of love. As usual with Enright, it is unflinchingly honest and raw, and very real, which makes it impossible for her to wrap it up in a neat little happy-ever-after bow as some might like. It is bleak, it is depressing, but it is also – and this gets lost on many readers – darkly funny. There is a delicious irony in Gina’s take on the wife’s refusal to recognize what’s going on under her nose – “we should know why we do the things we do. Otherwise it’s just a mess” – when it is clear from Gina’s self-justifications that she is less than honest with herself. Her attempts to blame others or to paint the affair with an air of inevitability so as to absolve herself of culpability are unconvincing to the reader and, one must assume, to Gina. There may be no one writing today who does as good a job of delving so deeply into the psyche of her narrator, and the only way to do that so successfully is with the technique used here, uncompromising self-reflection, so we come to understand, if not agree with, Gina. Enright also has a gift for painting a miniature portrait with a single phrase; one character, for example “was the kind of woman who would count the number of peas she put on your plate.” Perfect.

And that leads me to the main problem I had with the book: I didn’t like the main characters. There is a self-absorption about them rendering them oblivious to the effect they have on others that makes it difficult to empathize with them. Gina, while a fascinating character study from a writing point of view, is a mass of whiny, self-indulgent rationalization about her own actions, at the same time condescending and judgmental towards those she considers her inferior, which encompasses, well, everyone. Her lover, Sean, is even worse. There is absolutely nothing in Gina’s retelling that gives us any understanding of why she – or any other woman – would fall for such a shallow, pretentious, pompous buffoon, and little of what happens later on serves to clarify the question. Yes, I get it, it’s an extension of her theme of idealizing love, but the attraction is still unexplainable.

But the bottom line is that the writing itself is simply too good to dismiss the book because of those issues. There is unadulterated literary mastery on every single page, if not every paragraph. Whatever the flaws of the novel – and it probably isn’t fair to call them flaws, since they’re obviously conscious literary choices – the use of language makes the journey worth the trip, even if you end up less than enchanted with the destination.

“Wanderin’ Life and Times” – The Elders – CD Review

There are basically two problems a band like the Elders faces when recording a CD. First, there is the standard they have set for themselves with their previous recordings, all of which were very good, and the most recent of which, “Gael Day,” was brilliant. The second problem is that The Elders have earned their reputation largely on the basis of their live shows, which are unparalleled, but which create an atmosphere that can be difficult to capture in a studio. Fortunately, on their latest CD, “Wanderin’ Life and Times,” neither of these problems appears to have posed any obstacle. With a perfect amalgam of Celtic, bluegrass, pop and folk/Americana influences, “Wanderin’ Life and Times” is a worthy successor to “Gael Day,” with strong story-telling and poetic lyrics backed by carefully thought-out musical accompaniment, at the same time capturing much of the energy and eclecticism of a live Elders show.



The Elders don’t just write songs, they tell stories, and the collection on this CD is further proof of that. “Building a Boat” wastes no time informing us that, yes, this is an Elders’ album, with the inescapable chorus and irresistible hook that reels us in immediately. “Forever Friend” reminds us of the unbreakable bonds between lifelong companions, while the title track, “Wanderin’ Life & Times” gives us a tale of journeys both spiritual and physical.

One of the real standouts in this album, “Appalachian Paddy” tells the story of Dinny McCann “a sliver of a man” who emigrates to America. Away from home, friends and family, Dinny is reinvigorated by the redemptive power of traditional Irish music. As the song breaks into a combination of kitchen Ceili/American mountain music, the unmistakable connection between Irish music and the music of the Appalachian Hills is made clear.

Those familiar with the Elders know that there will be (at least) one song on every CD that will bring a lump to the throat. From the opening plaintive strains of the whistle, that song on “Wanderin’” is clearly “Please Come Home,” an evocative and heartfelt tribute to the men and women serving in the armed forces. Another highlight among an album of highlights would have to be “Orange Plank Road,” a powerful homage to the site of some of the Civil War’s heaviest fighting, with a snare drum backdrop setting an appropriate marching counterpoint.

While some songs may evoke memories of past Elders’ tunes, it would be wrong to call The Elders predictable. Certainly nothing in their previous catalogue would have led anyone to expect the driving Skating “Station #9.” Similarly, “Common Man” builds upon an infectious but decidedly un-Elder-like groove that shows once again that Tommy Sutherland and Norm Dahlor can create a pocket as well as any rhythm section recording today.

The Elders know what works for them, they know what their army of fans is looking for in their music, and they come through for them every time. Given that, it would be easy to dismiss their recordings as formulaic. It would also be a mistake. This Kansas City powerhouse is still growing musically, as evidenced by “Wanderin’ Life & Times.”

The Elders make two local appearances this month, on January 27th at the Westcott Theater in Syracuse, and the next night at the Capitol Theatre in Rome. That still gives you almost a full month to pick up this CD and commit it to memory and listen for your favorites when they perform. “Wanderin’ Life and Times” is available at the Elders’ [on-line store](#) or as a download from [iTunes](#).

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

This month's recipe – “**Dublin Stewed Pork**” – *savor one of Ireland's classic meat dishes*

INGREDIENTS:

1-1/2 pounds Pork pieces	3/4 cup Stock or water
2 pounds Cooking apples	3/4 cup Cream
1 pound Onions	1 Seasoned flour
1 Tablespoon Brown sugar	1 Butter or bacon fat



METHOD

Chop meat and onion into rough pieces. Melt the fat or butter and gently fry the onion until tender. Remove from pan. Toss the meat in seasoned flour and brown quickly in fat. Place onions, meat, stock and sugar in a pot and simmer, covered, for 1-1/2 hours. Peel, core and chop apples. Add to pot. Continue cooking until apples are just cooked but not too mushy. Add cream and heat through. **DO NOT BOIL!** Correct seasoning, and serve. Servings: 4

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@ymail.com.

Oh, and to new subscriber Jack Kelly: Thanks for sending along the hilarious “Christmas Cake (w/Vodka)” recipe. Although it was too late to make this issue, I promise it'll find its way into a future issue. We just have to... um... test it a few times first.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

☘ **“Nuacht as Craobh Dugan”---news from the Dugan Branch** Chris Hoke of Craobh Dugan reports: “Our open sessions continue on the 1st Tuesday at The Nail Creek Pub and on the 3rd Wednesday at The Mill. Both begin at 7:30; all are welcome to join in playing ‘our’ music or just come to listen. Both sessions are great fun and well-attended. NOTE: The Mill session begins with an hour or so as a ‘slow session’ to assist those learning tunes and those new to the music. After the first hour, things heat up and are played more up to speed. So come on over to the Nail Creek or to The Mill and catch a taste of Ireland right here in your neighborhood! ... Our ceili dance classes will start up again on Friday evenings at 7:00 PM at The Seton Center on Barton Ave. We have had a slight lull in participation in the dance classes this past fall, so we hope with the new year, YOU will consider joining us! It is fun, it is great exercise and it is free!! You do not even have to have a partner! So..... you have no excuse for not trying out the ceili dance classes. They begin again on January 6th. Here is our January calendar: Jan 3--Open Session at the Nail Creek Pub, 7:30 PM; Jan 6--Ceili Dance Class at Seton Center, 7:00 PM; Jan 13--KAC Performance, 8.00 PM; Jan 18--Open Session at The Mill, 7:30 PM (NOTE: Slow session until 8.30); Jan 20—Ceili (with musicians) at Seton Center, 7:00 PM; Jan 21--Annual Appreciation Dinner, Holland Patent American Legion, 1-5 PM.”

☘ **Comhaltas NASC Raffle:** Each year in the spring, Comhaltas in Dublin runs a raffle for which each branch is encouraged to sell tickets. There are several money prizes (everyone likes that, right??) and the best thing is that the branch keeps 90% of the money they take in from selling the tickets... so it is a win/win raffle!! This past year, Craobh Dugan's own Bill Fahy won first prize, and another prize winning ticket was also sold by someone in the group. Tickets will be available all of Craobh Dugan events until April, at which time the returns have to be sent in to Dublin. The cost is \$2 each and \$10 for 6 tickets.

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

Jan 2	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 3	"Nail Creek Sessions"	Nail Creek Pub	Utica	7:30 PM	Free
Jan 5	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 6	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 6	Vishtën	"Old Songs" Concert Series	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$23; kids \$5
Jan 6	"Mostly Irish" Monthly Jam	Irish American Club	Amsterdam NY	7:30 PM	Free
Jan 7	Syracuse Irish Session	J. Ryan's Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 8	Donal O'Shaughnessy & Bryan Hyland	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 9	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 12	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 13	"All Irish Night" Commemorative Concert	Kirkland Art Center	Clinton, NY	8 PM	\$15; \$12 for KAC members
Jan 14	Hair of the Dog	Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res'v rec.
Jan 15	Blarney Rebel Band	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	5-8 PM	Free
Jan 15	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 16	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 18	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 18	Traditional Irish Session	The Mill	Rome, NY	7:30 PM	Free
Jan 20	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 20-21	Hair of the Dog	Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res'v rec.
Jan 21	The Rogues	Shannon Pub	Tonawanda, NY	9 PM	\$10 adv, \$15 at door
Jan 22	TBA	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 23	Trad Irish Music Session	The Susquehanna Café	Bainbridge NY	5:30-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 26	Traditional Irish Session	Marcellus Legion Hall	Marcellus, NY	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 27	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 27	The Elders	The Westcott Theater	Syracuse	8 PM	\$15
Jan 27-28	Hair of the Dog	Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13, res'v rec.
Jan 28	The Elders and Searson	Capitol Theatre	Rome NY	7 PM	\$25 adv, \$35 at door
Jan 29	Halfway to GAIF Hooley w/ Searson & Blarney Rebel	Hart's Hill Inn	Whitesboro	2 PM – 6 PM	\$10 for GAIF volunteers; \$25 for guests/public
Jan 29	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 30	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@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, we would like to say (but can't, without the pronunciation guide that follows): *"Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh"* (pronounced AH vlee-ihn fwee WAH-shuh gHeev); literally: "You have a Prosperous New Year."