



The Cairde Connection

“Keeping the Irish Arts Alive!”

Irish Cultural Center at
Elms College

Volume 10 & Issue 6

July 2009

President Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese visit the Center

The president of Ireland, President Mary McAleese, honored the local Irish by visiting the Center on Sunday May 24, 2009. The event was organized by Consul General, David Barry. Because of space and security concerns, the guest list was limited. Upon her arrival, the President spent a few minutes admiring our Center displays before stepping into the larger meeting space to address the assembled guests.

The short program included: Interim Elms College President Walter Breau who gave the greetings of the college; Sister Judith Kappenman who welcomed those assembled on behalf of the board; and Congressman Neal who spoke of America's part in the peace process in Northern Ireland.



President McAleese began her remarks by speaking of the photos and displays she had just viewed in the Center and the sadness of the Blasket Islanders who left their home, as had so many of the Irish. She spoke of the importance of keeping the connection with a place and praised the generation after generation of immigrants who remember their culture and honor the contributions of their ancestors. She praised the founders of the Irish Cultural Center and those who sustain the organization in order to promote Irish culture and “keep the Irish arts alive.”

Guests included the founders and board members through the years; Irish language enthusiasts; the Blasket Islanders and other Irish immigrants; Elms College Irish Studies Minor professors and students; and lifetime members.

Photos clockwise from upper right: President Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese view the Blasket Island photos in the Center; Maureen Carney, Dr. Martin McAleese, President Mary McAleese, Michael Carney, Mairéad Shea and in the background Sean Cahillane (Michael and Mairéad are two of the eight people born on the Blasket Island still living); Dr. Martin McAleese, Sister Kathleen Keating, President Mary McAleese, Tom Moriarty, Sean Cahillane (Sister Kathleen, Tom and Sean are listed as the founders of the Center.) Photos taken by Michael Dialessi.



The Irish Cultural Center, founded in 1999, strives to “keep the Irish arts alive.”

The Irish Cultural Center...

- Serves as a public forum for events, including lectures, musical presentations, films and exhibits
- Promotes ties between the Center and educational organizations in Ireland, especially with the Basket Cultural Center
- Serves as an academic link with Irish American social organizations in Western New England.

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Summer and fall events highlighted

You are invited to attend the program by the Celtic Adventures for Kids on Friday, July 31, 2:00 pm in the Dooley Center at the Elms College. The children will showcase some of the lessons learned during the week – an exhibit of craft projects, singing, playing the tin whistle and even speaking Irish.

The Irish Cultural Center sponsors the Camp for children from grades 1-9 the last week of July. About fifty children will study the Irish language, culture and heritage. They will take part in several classes daily: dance, music, including the tin whistle, Irish language, arts and crafts, story telling and literature. They are “keeping the Irish arts alive!” at a young age. We welcome volunteers, including former campers who work as junior counselors.

From Sept 18-28 we will have an exhibit at the Big E in West Springfield where we will showcase our programs and events, as well as have information on the Elms College and its programs. We'll also give assistance to some of the Dingle merchants. Please stop by to say “Hello” and then visit the merchants to see their wares.

We are pleased to announce the 10-year anniversary of the Irish Cultural Center on the weekend of

October 9-11, 2009. We hope you can join us in our celebration weekend. We have a variety of activities planned that will offer guests and visitors art, music, dance, films, lectures, workshops, liturgy, and a whole lot of fun.

The Irish Cultural Center began as a way to promote Irish heritage and offer cultural events to citizens of Western Massachusetts and beyond. Since the beginning, we have expanded both in membership and in our quality of events, which now include trips to Ireland, a celebration of Irish Christmas, a tea party, annual film festivals, art exhibits, lecture series, ongoing study of the Irish language, scholarships, a summer camp for children with an Irish theme, bus trips to plays and genealogical centers.

The weekend includes: art exhibit and music session on Friday: workshops and films during the day on Saturday with a Makem and Spain Brothers concert at the Warehouse?, Holyoke in the evening; and on Sunday a Liturgy in Our Lady's Chapel followed by brunch with speaker Peter Quinn who will deliver the Kennedy lecture. We look forward to seeing you at any, or all, of our anniversary events in October. Don't miss it!

Please consider supporting us when you receive the ad drive form.

Sympathy and prayers requested

Mary Rivest, faithful member and long-time volunteer died on May 1, 2009. In 2002 she donated a print of a Civil War soldier of the all-Irish 69th New York State Volunteers. It has a place of pride in the Center.

Member Jerri Linn Nielsen Fitzgerald died in June.

We extend our sympathy to Sister Maureen Martin on the death of her brother, James; Dorothy Tuttle on the death of her brother Robert.

We ask for continued prayers of healing for Gerry Callahan, Mike Rancitelli, Kathleen Gilhooly, Mary Franz and Peg Tourloukis, undergoing treatment or rehab.

A Bit More Irish By Gerald Chip Costello

When I left Ballyferriter last summer, my teacher suggested that I study and take a test in the Irish language administered through the Language Center at NUI Maynooth. There are several levels offered from beginning to advanced, yet only the first level was to be offered in New York in April. I had the bug, however, and accepted her challenge.

The program is formally known as Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (The European Certificate in Irish). It provides a structured syllabus with clearly stated aims that enable you to monitor your learning and to maintain your focus. Since I can neither find my glasses in the morning nor remember where my car keys are, focus might just be what the doctor ordered.

There were fourteen topics that served as the basis for the exam. The syllabus was very helpful and provided good study materials. I studied on Saturday mornings and found pockets of time while traveling for work. For example, I would be sitting in the Detroit Airport with my syllabus and thinking "Ba mhaith liom cupán tae anois" (I would like a cup of tea now) or some other part of the lesson plans while others were headed to their gates enabling the wheels of commerce to start for the day.

My confidence was high when I thought about preparing for the exam in August. But as I got closer to April, I started wondering. I had not really taken many exams since graduating from college in the 1970s. After all the work, I was still the same guy searching for his glasses and keys.

In any event, I left the train station in Springfield on Friday, April 17th, for

New York. The test was held at New York University Glucksman House on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. When I arrived at Penn Station, I took a cab to the Marriott on the Upper East Side, spent some time studying that afternoon, walked down to the river, and thought about why it was important to me to be taking this test. I thought about my classes in Ballyferriter and the people whom I had met from Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands who studied Irish because they felt it was necessary to preserve the language. Taking the exam in the morning was the least I could do.

I awoke on Saturday, hoping for the best. I hailed a cab and arrived at Glucksman House at 8:30 a.m. As it turned out there were fifteen of us who were to take the exam. I had met four of these people at other Irish language events. Of course, my antennae went up since I knew they were much stronger speakers than I. *Ná bí buartha; bí sasta!* (Don't worry; be happy!)

The venue at NYU was like a private club, with nice paintings, books and furniture. We all gathered in a room where the facilitator gave the directions for the test in Irish, and we started with Listening Comprehension. There were stories read, and we had to respond to the questions, testing our understanding.

Next came a section on reading comprehension, and then to finish the morning, there was a section on writing. I think we were all ready for lunch at that point.

We all agreed that it was so nice out that we would walk through the neighborhood. As it turned out, there were ethnic festivities

taking place, so we had a wide variety of food from which to choose. I walked with a gentleman who grew up in Queens and was now living in Buffalo. There was no Irish in his background; he just enjoyed talking Irish and wanted to strengthen that skill. The most interesting person that I met that day was a gentleman who grew up in Belfast and moved to Paris in his early twenties. He is now 55. He was on holiday with his family in New York and knew that the exam was going to be given while he was there. It was interesting to be speaking with him in Irish and listening to his Irish laden with a heavy Parisian accent. Just as was my experience in Ballyferriter, the language is what connected us all from Springfield to Buffalo to Paris.

We walked back to Glucksman House for the final part of the exam. Each of us now had a twenty minute conversation with two ladies who had been flown into New York from Donegal to administer this part of the exam. We all waited to be called and were individually summoned upstairs. It was a bit like visiting the principal's office. In any event, we were given some material to look at and then were expected to talk about it and answer questions. For me, this was the hardest part of the test. At the end, we all breathed deeply and went back downstairs to meet our new friends, speak a bit more Irish, and finally say goodbye.

It was a short trip back to Springfield. I probably caught up on the sleep that I didn't get the night before the exam. After eight weeks, I finally received the results and happily can report that I passed. The next level of the program will be held in New York next spring. I hope I can convince one of you to join me. It is supposed to snow from November through March. What else are you going to do? *Slán go fóill.*

**Irish Cultural Center
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www.irish-cairde.org**

ICC Calendar of events

Ongoing: Language groups meet weekly: beginners, intermediate, conversation, advanced. Call the registrar at 265-2314 for fall classes that begin on Sept 14-15.

Genealogy volunteer
Ed Callahan (413) 527-5091
email eastgram@aol.com

3rd Sunday of each month, except March: Irish Music Seisiún, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Dooley Campus Center, dining hall annex
July 27-31 Celtic Adventures for Kids: week-long fun and learning experience, celebrating Celtic culture

and traditions.

Sept 18-October 4

Big E exhibit and information

October 9-11

a weekend of great events to celebrate our tenth anniversary (See page 2)

November 15

Bus trip to Worcester for the play Big Maggie

Dec 5

Christmas with an Irish Touch

Jan 27-Feb 3, 10, 17

Film series

Mar 7 Tea Party

Other events of interest

John Boyle O'Reilly

July 11 bus to New Britain Rock Cats

August 8 11th Annual Music Festival. Several bands to perform: headline band Black 47

August 12 Mid-week trip to Saratoga \$50 per person. See Bill Jones

August 22 Saturday trip to Saratoga \$30. See Eric Devine. www.jbo-club.com

Sons of Erin

August 1: 9th Annual Pat Hurley Open
www.sonsoferin.com

AOH

July 11 at 6.30 p.m. Wherehouse? Picnic-scholarship awards. Tickets are \$12 for adults \$7 for children. Hot dogs, hamburgers, salad, dessert and entertainment: Pat Kelleher and family.

Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival

Saturday, July 18 at Look Park, Florence Cost \$15, children 6-12 \$5, children under 6 free.

www.glasgowlands.org

Blackstone Valley Festival

Saturday, July 25 Indian Ranch, Webster
www.blackstonevalleycelticfestival.com