



The Cairde Connection

“Keeping the Irish Arts Alive!”

Irish Cultural Center at
Elms College

Volume 12 & Issue 2

November 2011

The Aran Islands come alive with dramatic recital

We invite you to attend a dramatic recital performed by Tegolin Knowland and Sean Coyne of Ireland on Wednesday, November 2 at 7 p.m. in the Alumnae Library Theater. The adaptation by Eamon Grennan magically brings Synge’s text to life, enabling us, like Synge to hear the wild and wistful voices of the islanders, and, indeed, the island itself. The event is free and open to the public; we accept free will offerings.

Encouraged by W.B. Yeats, John M. Synge (b. 1871) visited the Aran Islands on four occasions, each lasting a month, between 1898 and 1901.

The account of his time there, *The Aran Islands* was written in 1901, achieving lasting distinction as a record of a particular landscape, seascape, climate, and way of life. This “dramatic recital for two voices” at-

tempts, by choosing a number of passages to give the flavor of the book and of the island life it documents. It’s a life that remains immediate to us in language that has kept its shine through the century that has passed since Synge’s early death in 1909.

Tegolin Knowland trained at London’s Central School of Speech and Drama and the Drama Studio (Post Graduate) where she received Hillman Best Actress Award. She teaches drama in schools in North Conemaugh, as well as running Summer Camps in Art and Drama. She is a member of The Actors Equity Association in Ireland.

Sean Coyne has a passionate interest in theatre. In addition to his role as performer, Sean also serves as production/stage bookings manager, set/lighting/special effects designer and

sound technician. The production was adapted, devised and directed by Eamon Grennan, a Dubliner originally, a poet and teacher who has lived for over forty years in the United States. Having received his Ph.D. from Harvard University, he taught for thirty years in the English department of Vassar College. Currently he teaches in the graduate writing programs of Columbia University and New York University. He has published several books of poetry, as well as a book of literary criticism.

Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to the family and friends of Sister Margaret James McGrath, long-time Elms faculty member and Robert Crane, father of Sean Patrick Crane.

Christmas with an Irish Touch focuses on the language and children

For the second year in a row we will offer at our Christmas with an Irish Touch celebration songs performed by Dan Kane and his young singers.

The celebration begins on December 3 at 2 p.m. in Veritas Auditorium, Berchmans Hall. Come join us for this very special Christmas music program featuring several of their children and adult soloists.

At 4 p.m. we will have Liturgy in Our Lady’s Chapel with readings and the sung parts of the Mass in Irish. Father Mark Stelzer will preside. Music will be provided by Our Lady, Mother of Hope folk group led by Kathleen Gilhooly. The readings will be read in

Irish by Pádraic Déiseach and Tom Moriarty; our booklet will provide the English translation.

At the entertainment we will serve refreshments. The event is free and open to the public. We will conduct a raffle and take free will offerings. Berchmans Hall and Our Lady’s Chapel are both handicapped accessible.

This event, begun in 1999, is our oldest and most continuous annual program. For the entertainment we have had guest artists, as well as some of our own local talent. For the liturgy we have welcomed area priests to preside.

Member renewal

We ask you to watch your mail for our annual 2012 member letter and renewal form which we will mail in the next several weeks. Listed among our members are those who have renewed annually since its founding in 1999 up to those who have joined over the years, as well as those who joined for the first time in 2011.

We thank all of you for your membership and particularly those people who have anticipated the letter and have already sent in dues for 2012. We have opportunities for members to become more involved by joining one of our committees, especially our development group. If you have an interest and the skills, please contact the center.

The Irish Cultural Center 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 Blasket Cultural Center
- Serves as an academic link with Irish American social organizations in Western New England.

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Celebration of two cultures coming together

On September 29 about 70 people gathered for the opening of the photographic exhibit “To Love Two Countries.” One of the visitors wrote in the guest book, “This is a wonderful celebration of two cultures coming together.”

Another commented on the fact that the faces tell so many stories. Eileen Sullivan, daughter of Tim and Kathleen Sullivan who are pictured, wrote, “Beautiful photographs of a wonderful generation of Irish Immigrants.”

Another attendee called the opening a “happy” one. The subjects of the photos who were able to attend, stood proudly before their image and delighted in finding photos around the gallery in the Borgia Gallery of friends or emigrants who came from the same county.

Visitors exclaimed over the photos and met friends to talk about old times. Tim Donoghue and Bill Dempsey provided an Irish musical background.

Irish Arts Center Director, Aidan Connolly gave an overview of the



project and its title. The first phase included folks from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The second phase included Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, and these are the ones included in this exhibit.

One of the New York emigrants interviewed when asked about the sadness of leaving her country said, “Yes, I am sad, but I have learned to love two countries.” Thus the organizers found the title.

Each of the subjects of the photos told their story, and their taped interviews are being transcribed for future access at New York University, and eventually on the Internet.



Pictured above: Frank McAvin, Sr. Eleanor Dooley, Judy McAvin pose in front of his portrait; left: Aidan Connolly speaks of the origin of the project; right: Sr. Mary Magdalen poses with three of her former Cathedral High School students, Mary Ellen O'Brien, Tim Donoghue, Kathryn Groffman.

Who Do You Think You Are? Learning More About Our Irish Ancestors

By Mary Ellen Lowney

Tracing your Irish roots? Some key advice from an expert: Start at home.

Begin with yourself, map out your parents, then your grandparents, and all the way back to Ireland. Only then should you make your trip back to the homeland.

That was the advice from Christine Kinealy, professor of history at the Caspersen Graduate School at Drew University, keynote speaker at our annual breakfast.

Before an audience of about 100 at the Yankee Peddler Inn in Holyoke, Kinealy gave solid advice to those looking for the details on Irish roots. Kinealy, who grew up in Liverpool, England, but whose roots are in Ireland, said the best place to start is with your relatives at home, and in person.

“Talk to your family members, especially the older ones. They have stories to tell that can lead you to names, and places,” she said.

Kinealy also urged genealogy seekers to find the truth for themselves, rather than hiring the job out.

“It’s the family that brings things into context,” she said. “No one will have the passion for it more than yourself.”

Kinealy was the keynote speaker at the annual event that celebrates the work of the Irish Cultural Center, which this year celebrates the theme ‘The Ties That Bind,’ giving new meaning to Kinealy’s talk. A historian, Kinealy confessed that she came to study Irish history more by accident than design.

She grew up in Liverpool, the daughter of immigrants with roots in Dublin, Belfast and Wexford, taking an interest in history in general rather

than her own Irish roots. But she spent summers in Castlegregory, County Kerry at a family home, and ended up a young scholar in Derry, where she was drawn into genealogy by chance after a colleague asked her to write an article on the topic for a magazine.

Once that happened, she quickly saw the connections between the study of dates, times and events, and the stories of the people who fill in the blanks.

“You have that in-depth knowledge of the people in your family, and they can share this with you. They will give you clues to your own ancestry,” she said.

Kinealy put the story of Irish genealogy into context, drawing a map of the tragic history that lures so many into the details of their family strains. She went as far back as the Celts, who ruled Ireland from about 600 BC to 100 BC, when the Gaels came in from what is now known as northern Europe. Catholicism and the monastery period began in the 6th Century, a period that lasted until the Vikings swept the country in the 900s, eventually settling and making their heavy mark. The English moved west in the 12th Century, ruling the Irish with an iron, and often cruel, fist for the next 800 years.

During that long period, Irish people lost their right to own land and choose their own leaders, forced to move south and west, and becoming impoverished even as their rulers exported the food and livestock that had been the mainstay of the Irish economy.

What did they eat? Potatoes and cream, which Kinealy said made for a healthy diet despite the poverty. For



years, the Irish people were among the tallest and healthiest in the world. The population peaked at 8.5 million in 1845, and then something happened that drove millions to death and overseas flight.

The Great Famine. It began in 1845 with the potato blight and lasted on and off for six years. The British provided aid during the first year, but after that it was cut drastically. Between 1 million and 1.5 million people died of hunger and the resulting illnesses during those terrible years. “People died by the roadside. They say fever follows famine, and that’s what happened during those years. People were afraid to bury their dead,” Kinealy said.

The end result was a loss of 25 percent of the population over a six-year period. By 1851, the population had fallen to 6.5 million. In 1901, it was 4.5 million. Most went to the United States, where they faced discrimination and hatred.

That didn’t stop the flight, however. And on top of that tragedy, the British rulers did not require a count of the dead or of those who left, making tracing roots from more than 150 years ago very difficult.

“If you can get to the 1820s, you can go back to the 1790s, but beyond that it becomes very difficult,” Kinealy said.

See WHO DO YOU Page 4

Who Do You Think continued from page 3

Some tips for budding genealogists who make the trip to Ireland on the hunt for names, dates and places:

Between 1820 and 1892, people leaving Europe for the United States were processed at the Castle Clinton Station in Lower Manhattan. It's now a museum, and contains a trove of information.

Between 1892 and 1954, the first stopping point was Ellis Island, also in New York. There's a website with much information from that facility. Many families were separated, and many names changed, on the way through those gates. Don't count on the spelling of your family name to be exactly the same.

The Irish Census began to be kept in 1821, and was done every 10 years. But the Irish weren't always counted, and the records of 1871, 1881 and 1891 were destroyed by being pulped during World War I.

There are complete Irish Census records online and free for the years 1901 and 1911. The old-age pension was put into place before the 1911 count and many exaggerated their



Pictured above: Sr. Judith Kappenman, Chip Costello, Padraic Deiseach, Christine Kinealy, Fran Hennessey, Ann Lowe. On page 3 Tom Moriarty and Christine Kinealy converse.

ages. Kinealy said to watch for "mistakes" during that count.

In 1921 there was no census done due to the war, but it resumed in 1926, done again in 1931 and then every 10 years.

Kinealy said other records to look for in Ireland include land records, wills and gravestones. There are also parish records, and unusual records such as church records in France, where priests were forced to train and be registered because of anti-Catholic laws in Ireland.

For those whose ancestors left for

Australia, there are great records. The National Archives in Dublin also has records, including many from the rebellions and strife in the early 1900s.

Eight years ago, Great Britain made public Irish records dating back to 1916.

There are records online of the 1912 Ulster Covenant, signed by 500,000 Irish people, half of them women. County libraries in Ireland are also a fine source of information, Kinealy said.

Kinealy closed by urging people to keep looking if they are interested, even with the dearth of records.

"It's never easy, but always rewarding to research your family tree. You may find relatives you don't want, but you always find some that you do," she said.

Kinealy is the author of 'This Great Calamity,' 'A Death-Dealing Famine,' 'The Great Irish Famine,' 'A Disunited King,' and many other books and publications. She was named a top 100 Irish American in 2011 and is the recipient of the 2009 Will Herberg Award for Excellence in Teaching.

"Journey of the Soul" Indeed By Katie Doe

It was this past March when I made a quick decision to join the Irish Cultural Center's 2011 trip to Ireland. I wanted to see Galway again, and especially wanted to visit Dingle. I understand why the trip is named "Journey of the Soul" – I felt the pull to go back to Ireland, and



this trip seemed custom made for me.

After just a short time, our group felt like we were old friends. We visited Galway and strolled down bustling Shop Street; we walked along the quiet, windy cliffs of Dún Aengus on Inis Mór. We drove through the rocky countryside of Connemara and along the beautiful coast of Slea Head. We stood 700 feet above the ocean on the Cliffs of Moher, and put our toes in the chilly surf on Inch Beach. We enjoyed the craic of a traditional music festival in Dingle town, and some of us were able to practice our Irish language skills in the pub over a

pint. At the Blasket Island Centre and the Skellig Michael Experience, we learned what life was like for the people who lived in those remote places. We toured the stately home of Muckross House, and the humble thatched cottages of the Kerry Bog Village. We traveled through the beautiful expanses of the Ring of Kerry and Killarney National Park.

Every day was a full experience. Leaving was bittersweet at the end of our 10-day trip. We were tired, but full of wonderful memories. Thanks to the Irish Cultural Center for this incredible experience. I'm ready to start planning my next trip to this country in which I feel so at home.

Learning to love the Irish language by Jonathan T. Hohl Kennedy

I love learning. Ever since I was young, I have been curious about the world around me and the people and things in it. Through my school years, I was a busy person between learning what was required and learning what I wanted to learn, and sometimes I was fortunate when they were one and the same.

As a secondary level science teacher, I am learning constantly and find my job rewarding for a variety of reasons. I derive the most enjoyment from the idea that I am assisting the shaping of society at a community level and providing a support system for my students as they grow, learn, and mature into young adults. Because I love to learn, I feel that I am able to continue my own learning and to share it with my students and spread an infection of a love of learning.

I remember hearing a friend's aunt speak Irish when I was a child living near Boston, and it sparked my curiosity. I play the uilleann pipes and my wife, Amanda Bernhard, plays the fiddle and the pipes. Through our musical connections, we met Dáithí Sproule, a fluent speaker who plays guitar in the Irish band Altan, and in 2003, I began studying Irish with him,

along with several others from the local Irish traditional music scene. For several years, our group met with Dáithí, who provided generous assistance and inspiration in our pursuit of competence in the Irish language. When he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, Amanda and I continued our study of the language on our own through self-directed study, a local high school after-school class, informal conversation group meetings in coffee shops, and by traveling to language workshops across Massachusetts and New York, as well as in Donegal, Ireland.

From September 2010-June 2011 Amanda and I took the class taught by Fulbright Language Teacher, Maitiú de Hál at Elms College. We are thankful to the College and to Maitiú for the instruction and are excited to study in this year's program as well. Not only was he a skilled teacher but he spoke the same dialect of Irish that we have been learning. Some of the best times during Maitiú's visit to the States were when we spent times outside of class and spoke Irish for hours. I realized that if I am serious about my language study, I need to be in a long-term immersion

situation to concentrate more of my time and energy to the study.

I am asked frequently, "Wy Irish?" I have thought about this and believe that the simplest answer is, I love the language. I could connect it with my strong Irish background or my love of traditional music, but I think the most accurate answer is simply my love and admiration of the language. I have been working within my high school system to teach an Introduction to Modern Irish course, but due to budget cuts, I haven't been able to start the program.

I am currently applying for an M.A. in Nua-Ghaeilge at the National University of Ireland, Galway. After I complete the program, I could return to the States to continue my teaching career with the added component of teaching Irish courses, or I could remain in Ireland and investigate positions where I could teach science through the Irish language as I have strong support of Irish as a functioning, working language. If I am fortunate enough to have the opportunity to complete the M. A. in Nua-Ghaeilge, I will work hard to teach, support, and help spread the use of the Irish language that I have grown to deeply respect and admire.

We welcome the Fulbright Language Teacher

Pádraic Déiseach, originally from Cork, and with a degree from National University of Ireland, Galway, arrived on the campus shortly before classes began the first semester to begin a year of teaching the Irish language.

He is teaching two Irish classes: a novice group during the day and an intermediate group in the evening. In addition, he is taking two college courses. Perhaps you have met him in one of his classes. From reports that

this writer has heard, he is doing a fine job teaching the language. Perhaps you met him at one of our events; he attended both the photographic exhibit and the annual breakfast.

During the second semester he hopes to offer some programs for the Irish Cultural Center. Watch for an announcement of those events.

In addition to his classes, Tom Moriarty is teaching an Introduction to Irish in the evening.

10-DAY SUMMER TOUR TO IRELAND!

**"Emerald Isle Classic"
Notre Dame vs. Navy Football Game***

**August 25-September 3, 2012
Dingle - Kinsale - Kilkenny -
Dublin**

Visit: www.Irish-Cairde.org
For More Info Call: Kathy Gallivan at
(413) 536-9709
Or email: kgallivan04@gmail.com

** Game will be played on Sept. 1, 2012
in Dublin's "New" Aviva Stadium*

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**“Keeping the Irish
Arts Alive!”**

ICC Calendar of events

Ongoing: Language Classes offered each semester; call the Registrar at 413-265-2314 or Continuing Ed Office at 413-265-2218.

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

November 2, 7 p.m.
Dramatic recital “J.M. Synge: The Aran Islands”

December 3, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.
Christmas with an Irish Touch
Entertainment and liturgy

Jan 25. Feb 1, 8, 15, 7 p.m.
Film series

Feb TBA
St. Brigid’s Day cross making

March 11
Ceili at Sons of Erin

March 18
Holyoke St. Patrick’s Parade

April or May TBA
La Na Gaeilge—day-long Irish workshop

July 23-27
Celtic Adventures for Kids

August 25-September 3
Trip to Ireland

For information on our partner Irish organizations, check out the programs on these web sites.

AOH
www.AOH-Holyoke.com

John Boyle O’Reilly Club
www.jbo-club.com

Sons of Erin
www.sonsoferin.com

St. Patrick’s Parade Committee
www.holyokestpatricksparade.com

The Irish Cultural Center has unique ties to the Blasket Islands. Read about member Michael Carney's return to his home in the Irish Independent under the title Blasket Islander home after 74 years. Read the article at www.independent.ie.