

August at the Museum!



Sunset at Ballybunion, Co. Kerry.

August - Lughnasa, Harvest Festival, and Welcomes!

This time of year always reminds me of the last, long days of the summer holidays of my childhood, before we had to return to school and routine. The days are very long in Ireland during the summer, with a "grand stretch in the evening" as the sun often does not set until after 10pm. Last year, the August newsletter told you the story of Lugh and the old Celtic traditions of harvest time which still appear in the countryside. This time, I wanted to discuss the tradition of welcomes for which Ireland is so famous, as August is the last month to enjoy our summer holidays!

Washington Irving once wrote, "there is an emanation from the heart in genuine hospitality which cannot be described, but is immediately felt and puts the stranger at once at his ease." Many visitors to Ireland can attest to experiencing this whole-hearted welcome from people on their trips to the Auld Sod; whether it is being entertained by locals in a small pub, or some chatty person giving you colorful but complicated directions on a road trip! Or the people in a

town where you are searching for your roots, who show you the graveyard, or introduce someone else who knew the family better. Every week, people visiting the museum share their memories of Ireland and the friendly encounters they have had while over there.

In fact, hospitality was a law under the Brehon code, and has become so ingrained in Irish culture it is no accident that it has become as synonymous with Ireland as "forty shades of green". Tourism brochures proclaim: Céad míle fáilte! A hundred thousand welcomes! Many a souvenir tea towel reads: "Bid thy guests welcome though they come at any hour."

Under Brehon Law, all households were obliged to provide some measure of oigidecht (hospitality) to travelers, even if unknown, as the root word oigi actually means 'stranger.' This hospitality included food, drink, a bed, and entertainment. No prying questions could be asked of the guest, and once hospitality was accepted, the visitor was obliged to refrain from any violence or quarrel in the house. Monetary payment was never expected, but exchanges of traveling tales, poetry, and songs were welcome.

Refusal to offer hospitality was not only a sure road to an embarrassing reputation, it was illegal and a fine could be levied on the offending household. Old Irish literature tells of one nobleman's fall from grace for having committed that indiscretion. King Bres, who is said to have been half-Fomorian and half-Tuatha de Danaan, ruled for seven years and during that time no one ever received hospitality in his court. When he treated the illustrious poet Cairbre in so rude a manner, the bard composed such a scathing satire about Bres that the king was forced to give up his kingdom and flee to the land of his Fomorian father.

The Brehon Law's hospitality proviso applied to all whether rich or poor, but to minimize the burden on families each local Ri (chieftain) established bruideans (public houses) within his territory and appointed briugus to administer them. Being a briugu was a position of high honor that brought with it not only prestige and wealth but numerous privileges as well. A briugu could have as many servants as a king and enjoyed the same protections. A tract of land large enough to keep the bruidean supplied with provisions was entrusted to the briugu's stewardship and it required excellent management skills.

A typical bruidean sat at a major crossroad. It had doors on all four sides with each being manned around the clock to insure that no one would pass by without receiving an invitation to enter, rest, and be refreshed. Torches lit the location at night so it could not be missed. There were explicit stipulations about the provisions that should be on hand at all times. Three uncooked red meats had to be available for cooking and three cooked meats or meat stews had to be ready to be served. As not only travelers, but also their entire retinues were included in the open door policy, prime livestock had to be available for slaughter should they be needed. A bruidean could have as many as two hundred animals grazing on its land, one hundred beds and one hundred servants.

In his seminal manuscript of 1634, *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn* (literally Foundation of Knowledge on Ireland but known as History of Ireland), the Irish priest, historian, and poet Seathrun Ceitinn (Geoffrey Keating) traced the history of Ireland from the creation of the world until the 12th-century Norman invasion of the island. In telling of Erin's hospitality tradition, Keating wrote that at one time there were more than 400 bruideans in Ireland and that six were so large they could be used for asylum in times of war.

The Brehon Laws may have receded into the pages of history, but the hospitality to strangers they required has remained an enduring and endearing element of Irish tradition. Of course, the pub today is still an integral part of local communities, and we know it was the linchpin in many immigrant communities here in the States. Pubs provided information from home, served as a meeting place, and a job center - and launched many Irish-American politicians on their career in civil service! A visit to a small, local pub is a must on any trip to Ireland, for the "craic," not just a drink! Fáilte!!

With thanks to Irish America Magazine.

**Annual Celtic Cruise on the Dutch Apple
Dutch Apple Boat, 1 Quay Street, Albany
Tuesday August 6th, Board at 6:45 for a 7pm cruise**



UNITED IRISH SOCIETIES OF THE
CAPITAL DISTRICT &

THE IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE
MUSEUM

ANNUAL CELTIC CRUISE

TUESDAY AUGUST 6th 2019

- 6.30pm Boarding for a 7pm Sailing until 10pm
- \$35 in advance; \$45 on the day of the cruise
- Book online through our Facebook page
- Includes light fare and cash bar
- Entertainment provided by Don Kelly
- Fundraiser for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, Albany 2020

This is a fantastic night of entertainment on the glorious Hudson River. Musical entertainment provided by Don Kelly, food provided by O' Slattery's of Delmar, and a cash bar - what more could you want with all this "craic agus ceol" and a beautiful sunset? Call the museum to reserve with your credit card, or use PayPal through our Facebook page.

**Irish Night at the Valley Cats
Joseph L. Bruno Stadium, 80 Vandenburg Avenue Troy, NY 12180
Wednesday August 7th, 7pm**



See the Tri-City ValleyCats take on the Lowell Spinners at The Joe!

Tonight's action will include a post-game fireworks display!

Gates open at 5pm for a pregame concert from award-winning Irish band Hair of the Dog from 5:00-6:30pm. Enjoy a corned beef & cabbage dinner special and Guinness while supplies last!

**Launch of *Irish Impressions*
Photographs by Members of the Schenectady Photographic Society
Saturday August 10th 2pm.**

This exhibit contains thirty images of Irish-Americans in the Capital District as well as various images taken in Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is scheduled to run from Friday, August 2 through Sunday, September 29.

Founded in 1931, the Schenectady Photographic Society offers programs and activities for photographers from throughout the Capital District.

Their Wednesday night meetings offer an assortment of programs. Four program areas - print, projected image, photo essay, and mentoring - help members expand their photographic vision and creativity through competitions, peer critiques, and roundtable discussions. Guest speakers regularly share their work and offer insight into their creative image making process. Occasional field trips, photo shoots, and workshops offer fun hands-on instruction and image making opportunities. For more information, including the meeting schedule, visit them online at www.spsphoto.org



**Travels in Ireland: A Presentation by Phil Olivo
Schenectady Photographic Society
Wednesday August 14th 7pm**

Phil Olivo, member of the Schenectady Photographic Society, will give a presentation of his travels in Ireland, regaling us with his encounters with the locals and the beautiful Irish landscape. Phil took the picture of an Irish cottage, shown below, in Northern Ireland, and some of his photographs will showcase that part of the world.



**Special Screening: Find Your Way Home (An Irish Musical)
Park Playhouse, Washington Park, Albany
Sunday 18th and Monday 19th August 8pm
Reception for ticket-holders at 6.30 pm at the Museum.**

The Irish American Heritage Museum is delighted to announce a special screening of "Find Your Way Home(An Irish Musical)," filmed on Broadway. Local writers Jeff Strange and James Kelly are featured for a 2 night screening of their Musical. It was performed with an all Irish cast at The Palace Theatre in 2017 and also in Boston with a final performance in NYC. There was a 4 camera shoot and has been edited into a movie. The movie will be followed by a Q and A with the writers. It is open to the public, and there is reserved seating at the Park for \$15.00. Ticket-holders are invited to attend a pre-screening reception at the Irish American Heritage Museum at 6.30 pm on the evening of their attendance.



Film Club: After Braveheart

Monday, August 26th, 3.00pm AND 7pm. \$5

In 1314, the Scots defeated their English oppressors at the Battle of Bannockburn. It was a victory that should have ensured Scottish freedom - but it didn't. Even after Bannockburn, Scotland's king Robert Bruce and his brother Edward remained uneasy about the threat of a renewed English invasion. The best form of defense was attack. They decided to invade Ireland and make Edward high king there. In this way they would unite the Celtic nations and drive the English back to their homeland.

This is a story of two Celtic nations, a shared heritage and a forgotten war that could have changed the course of history.

The drama/documentary was made for RTÉ, BBC Northern Ireland and BBC Scotland under a joint initiative launched in 2012 to fund television programs of interest to viewers in all three territories.



Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Chris Newman
Celtic Hall, 430 New Karner Road
Tuesday, September 3rd, 7pm
\$15 for members, \$20 non-members

The virtuoso partnership of "the greatest Celtic harper of our age" (LIVE IRELAND) and a premier flatpicking guitarist and has by now brought its unique musical vision to twenty-two countries on five continents. Together they have created one of the most distinctive voices in modern acoustic music. Their six duo and five solo CDs, instructional books and collaborations with many other luminaries of the Celtic, folk, swing jazz and bluegrass worlds express both the depth of their commitment to tradition and an eternally playful, curious and adventurous spirit.

Over the years Chris and Máire have toured with Altan, Sharon Shannon, Cherish the Ladies, Patrick Street, the Rankins, Mary Black, Maura O'Connell, Dónal Lunny, Aly Bain, Boys of the Lough and many other leading bands and artists. Recording collaborations include a guest appearance on Irish rock legend Rory Gallagher's posthumous *Wheels within Wheels* (BMG), work with (among others) Dan ar Braz, Sharon Shannon, Dónal Lunny, Liam O'Flynn, Aly Bain, Danny Thompson, Cathy Fink, Boys of the Lough, and a quartet CD, *Heartstring Sessions*, with Arty McGlynn and Nollaig Casey.

Tickets available at the door but call the museum on 518 427 1916 to reserve your seats.



**Members Family Picnic and Barbecue
West Pavilion, The Crossings, 580 Albany Shaker Road
Sunday, September 8th, 1pm**

We invite our members to join us for a day of fun and friendship as we celebrate our members and our Irish culture. A family barbecue will be provided, but feel free to bring your favorite dish to share. We will have music, games, and demonstrations of Gaelic football by the Albany Rebels GAA Club. The Museum Members Picnic is a special opportunity to engage in family togetherness and outdoor summer play as the Museum thanks you for your continued support of our mission. For easy entry please be prepared with your membership card.

Situated in the heart of Colonie just a stone's throw from the hustle and bustle of Wolf Road, the 130 acre passive park features a pond, children's playground, acres of meadows, marshy wetlands and extensive wooded and wildflower areas - all of which are connected by 6.5 miles of multi-use trails for walking, running, biking and in-line skating that wind across the natural landscape. The Crossings of Colonie is a place that must be visited and explored to truly appreciate its peacefulness, diversity and beauty.



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