

# Seanchaí Cois Fharráige

## THE SEASIDE SEANACHIE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH AMERICAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH JERSEY

P.O. Box 195, Absecon N.J. 08201

Website: <http://home.comcast.net/~iacssj>

CHRISTMAS  
LUNCHEON  
DATE THE SAME

DECEMBER 20,  
2014

RESERVATION  
DEADLINE  
EXTENDED TO

DECEMBER 15,  
2014

Many of you already know that Helen Riso, Club Corresponding secretary and more importantly this time of year, Christmas Luncheon chair person, is currently in rehab. She fell and broke her hip (not the same one she destroyed a few years ago). But not to worry, a day after surgery, she was actively working ours and two other luncheons. Her set back does help you perennial late comers—she will still accept reservations up to the morning of December 15. She is assigning seating so please get your reservations in quickly and understand if you don't get your first choice of seating partners. We've had a number of questions about "guests". They are all welcome. Be sure to indicate your menu choice by filling out the request form at the bottom of the page. Choose from: Chicken Francaise, Baked Alaska Salmon, or Sliced Tenderloin of Beef. Write a check for \$25 per person made payable to IACS. That will take care of everything including tax and gratuities. Put it all in an envelope and mail it to Helen Riso, 619 Pitney Road, Absecon NJ. 08201. Recall we will gather at the beautifully decorated Atlantic City Country Club at noon on Saturday, December 20, for hors d'ouvres. We plan for lunch at around 1 PM. Helen has promised us fun and fund raising Christmas baskets as well as sing along holiday musical entertainment.

FILL IN AND CLIP

MAIL TO HELEN  
RISO  
619 PITNEY RD.  
ABSECON NJ  
08201

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### RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

#### IACS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON, DECEMBER 20, 2012

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

MENU

CHOICE(S) \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE SEAT ME

WITH \_\_\_\_\_

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Merry Christmas. Hope to see everyone at the Christmas party on the 20<sup>th</sup> and the December IACS ceili on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The Thanksgiving ceili was especially great with lots of songs including Christmas music. Nollaig Shona Daoibh. Rich O'Brien

BALANCED  
PROGRAM  
HIGHLIGHTS THE  
THANKSGIVING  
CEILI  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR THE  
TRAINED, AND  
BEGINNER  
DANCERS  
PLUS MOVING  
BALLADS

Jim Gillon reports: There were events at the November Ceili, which aroused the interest of the attendees, and may deserve further discussion:

- A heart warming increase in attendance by IACS of NJ members.
- The emotional rendition of "The Green Fields of France" by Joe McGonigal, dedicated to veterans, heard with reverence by all.
- In spite of the absence of two regular band members, the band of ten sounded strong, stimulating both trained and beginner to dance.

The next Ceili is scheduled for 7:30 pm. Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> of December at the American Legion Hall, 1st and Pennsylvania Ave, Somers Point. Your \$5:00 donation at the door will help feed the hungry through the efforts of the Holy Redeemer Food Bank.

HERE IS A  
LOVELY,  
TRUE STORY  
THAT DESERVES  
OUR THANKS  
AND  
RECOGNITION

A woman reads Walt Murphy's posting in the Atlantic City Press of the upcoming IACS meeting in October. It tells the who-harper Mary Kay Mann—and the rest of the meeting information. It is enough to interest the Taylor Nehmad and her mom, so they come to the program. They enjoy themselves and when Taylor hears Helen Riso make an appeal for business donations for the fund raising baskets at the Christmas luncheon, the woman decides to contribute. She contacts a couple of club members to find out how to do it. Her efforts pay off in over \$500 in gift certificates which she brings to the November meeting. She enjoys the Clan Subhne, and disappears into the night. She doesn't want recognition; may never return to another meeting. She would have to find another Walt Murphy article with a program that appeals. But her generosity and response made an impact on the few club members who knew about her effort on our behalf. We felt you should all know about it. And now you do.

YOU MAY HAVE  
MISSED, BUT WE  
ARE STILL  
HAPPY.

You missed Black Friday (no matter, our logo gear never go on sale) and you probably won't get it before Christmas (should have taken our advice last month). However, we would still be happy to outfit you in IACS gear. To order, call Pat Deluca 641-2979.

CAN'T RECALL  
WHEN YOU LAST  
PAID DUES?

NOW IS A GOOD  
TIME

PRICE,  
PROCESS AND  
BENEFITS  
UNCHANGED

HELP US  
CORRECT  
CLUB RECORDS  
WHEN YOU RE-  
UP

BEWARE!  
YOUTUBE.COM  
OFFERS ALL  
KINDS OF  
EXCELLENT  
IRISH  
PROGRAMING

If it seems like a long time since you paid dues, it probably is. Last year, we switched over to a January to December fiscal year, so we are pretty much all delinquent (not juvenile by a long shot). The dues collection process remains the same, either in person at a meeting or by mail to PO Box 195, Absecon NJ 08201. The cost of membership also is unchanged, \$10 for a member, \$15 for a family membership. Make your checks payable to IACSSJ. The benefits continue to include, pride of membership in an elite Cultural Society, continuing to support Irish Culture in our area, contributing to events such as the St. Patrick's Liturgy, the Boardwalk Parade, the monthly ceili, school programs and the wonderful educational and entertaining programs we open to members and the public alike. Your dues also brings you the Seanachie which keeps you up to date on what is going on in the club and things in our area of interest to Irish Americans. So your dues are still a bargain. We'd like to take this membership renewal opportunity to update our records, correct addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. We also want to insure we are following your choice of newsletter reception. **So if you mail in,** include a note with how you want your name listed on the club roster, your mailing address, your phone number, an e-mail address, and if you would like the newsletter sent to your e-mail address. More members are receiving the newsletter by e-mail, but we still emphasize it is your choice. We can have an e-mail address but still send you the Seanachie by snail mail.

I should have seen it as the trap it is, so in conscience I need to warn you. First, Mickey O'Brien recommended an Irish Youtube (November news letter) and then Walt Cottrell sent me another while he was watching a Celtic Thunder concert. While checking them out, I found an outstanding documentary on the history of Irish Folk Music with clips from all my favorites. When you watch one, there are links to four more you don't want to miss. For me it was Dubliners Live in Dublin, Clancy Brothers Live in Clonmel, a ton of Sharon Shannon and just about anyone else—I skipped the Pogues. But it is a time trap. Most are full concerts in the hour plus range. Thank goodness you can stop and restart at the same point later on. Google Youtube and your favorite Irish entertainer, but watch out for the time trap.

NO MATTER  
WHICH WAY YOU  
LOOK AT IT,

CLUB  
PROGRAMS  
APPEAR  
TERRIFIC

FILL A TUESDAY  
NIGHT WITH  
IRISH CULTURE  
AND  
ENTERTAINMENT

The Roman god Janus from whom next month takes its name had two faces, one looking forward and one looking back. A Janus looking over the club's programs should have a smile on both faces. Based on what I heard from club members after both shows, and based on the size of the crowds they drew, the October (Mary Kay Mann) and November (Clan Subhne) were exceptionally well received. Looking ahead, there appears to be a continuation of the high quality. Francesca Bishop, award winning Irish step dance and now director of her own school, Francesca's Performance Crew, will provide a variety of Irish dance and song related entertainment in January. They will be fresh from holiday programs at nursing homes. We've been in contact with the alumni of the Stockton theatre program who thrilled us with live Irish theatre in past years to bring a night of scenes from Irish plays in February. We have an excellent video as back up if the theatre night doesn't work out. After the liturgy in March, we will be introducing the club to Valerie Vaughn, the Garden State troubadour in April. She will depart from her usual repertoire of New Jersey folksongs, many she has written, to reprise her album of Irish folk music. Valerie Armstrong (fiddle) and Roberta Beckler (flute) will apply their talents to for the most part to Irish tunes. We have requested their presentation of the American Civil War piece Ashokian Farewell which John Armstrong accompanies with readings from Civil War soldier's letters home. To end the season on a high note, literally Irish tenor Timothy Liam Smith will return after a long hiatus from club programs. Will he show as John McCormack discussing his life and singing his songs or as the singers of Irish songs of his heritage? You will have to wait until June—but the wait should be great fun if you come out for all the programs.

R.I.P

You might have difficulty picking him out at a recent club event because George Sarkos was a quiet man, more often in the shadow of his vibrant, outgoing wife, Kathy. He was part of the Margate crowd that seemed so active in the club as a team. Gone are Monty and Mary Montgomery, Joe McBeth, and now George. Our condolences to the remaining group members, Hugh and Judy Gallagher, Bernadette McBeth and of course, Kathy. What a great liturgy for George. We said goodbye with the music from Zorba The Greek. Opa! .



## THE PIPER

DECEMBER 2014

## DONEGAL

Donegal people speak with the slow, inverted vowels of Ulster, but the Donegal accent is strangely mild. The further north you go, the more elongated the lilt and the softer the verbal gestures become. These people speak very gently but they're tough. Some of the most violent place-names in Ireland are here: Bloody Foreland, jutting out into the North Atlantic and surely named for the ferocity of the sea's battering; the Poisoned Glen, bleak, empty, lifeless.

There's no denying the startling violence of Donegal's Atlantic Coast. Along the northern edge, with no shelter from the ocean, millennia of attack by storms have bored sharp fissures into the land, such as Sheephaven Bay, Broadwater Lough, Mulroy Bay and the magnificent Lough Swilly, stretching 25 miles inland. Heading south and west, the land fights back, producing some of the most spectacular scenery in all of Ireland, the sheer cliffs at Horn Head contrasting with the vast deserted crescents of the beaches at Downies. Further south, shelter at Gweedore and Ardara and Dungloe is carved out by the sea. The cliffs of Slieve League on the Glencolumbkille promontory rise up, and over all are the great bleak mountains of Muckish, Errigal and Slieve Snacht, or Snow Mountain.

Malin Head is the most northerly point of Ireland. It is farther north than what the Irish call "the North" or Northern Ireland, though Malin Head remains part of the Republic. In Ireland borders zig zag through names and language, disappear, resurface, dissolve. Just 30 miles across the Sea of Moyle lies the Scottish island of Islay, and for dozens of centuries sea travel was the only realistic mode of transport. This was not a

boundary but a connection. Goods, soldiers, monks, language and culture flowed freely back and forth, and those deep connections still exist. The Irish language, the strong clan and tribal connections, the way of life centered on fishing and subsistence farming, the music, the storytelling, even the enthusiasm for illicit distilling—these are all shared across what has become an international border.

The Sea of Moyle is not easy water. When a January storm tears in from the northeast, lashed on by bitter winds that have met no other obstacle for 3000 miles, the sea is the stuff of nightmares. It was here that the Children of Lir, transformed into swans by their vindictive stepmother, had to spend 300 years awaiting release from the spell. Even compared to the rest of the Atlantic coast, where storms can be breathtaking, winter on the Sea of Moyle is a byword for misery.

Doe Castle was built by the MacSuibhne na dTuaith in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the family story illustrates how complex the migrations back and forth between the two islands could be. Their ancestors arrived in Ireland from Scotland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to work as mercenary soldiers or “gallowglasses” for the native Irish O’Donnell dynasty. They may have been forced out by a Norse invasion of Scotland or as part of a dispute with the Scottish king, Alexander III. They were reluctant migrants, but they spoke Gaelic and the culture they became part of in Donegal was a mirror image of their own. A dominant part of their Scottish heritage came from the 5<sup>th</sup> century invasion of Western Scotland by the Irish.

They had other ancestors, however, most conspicuously the Vikings who had raided and settled down in the Western Isles for almost three centuries. The mixture of warlike Celtic tribesmen and Nordic warriors produced a strain of people for whom fighting and hospitality both were second nature. The MacSweeneys typified the breed. Before long they had taken payment from the O’Donnells in the form of vast areas of the O’Donnells’ land. The land was divided into three chieftanships: MacSweeney Banagh, MacSweeney Fanad and MacSweeney.

The importing of mercenaries was necessary to fight the Normans who had been invited to Ireland by the King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, to fight on his behalf. and the Normans were also descended from the Vikings, so the mercenaries on both sides had overlapping ancestry.

