



The Richmond Claddagh
<http://richmondias.org/>

Lá Alaithe faoi Mhaise! Happy Thanksgiving

November 2010

NOVEMBER 4TH IAS MEETING – Glen Allen Library - 10501 Staples Mill Road Glen Allen, VA 23060-3242 (near 295) Ph: (804) 290-9500 - 6:30 Social – Meeting at 7 pm

For a very special night on the Irish in Virginia, Irish Historian, Author and favorite of the Richmond IAS, Kevin Dunleavy visits to discuss Clann Mhór - The Blue Ridge Railroad Project. Clann Mhór means Great Family in the Irish language. The name refers to all people— Irish workers, their families, enslaved African Americans and others who labored on the construction of the Blue Ridge Railroad and its four tunnels from 1850 through 1860. The longest of these is the Blue Ridge Tunnel on Afton Mountain, Virginia. At 4,263 feet, the Blue Ridge Tunnel was the longest in the United States at the time. Some sources say it was the longest in the world. It is a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. The tunnel is located under the junction of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive at Rockfish Gap, Virginia. Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and James Madison once stood on this spot to choose the site for the University of Virginia. But the real story of the Blue Ridge Railroad concerns the many hundreds of workers who drilled and blasted through tons of rock to build the tunnels and connecting tracks. Thousands of people died building railroads in America. Kevin will discuss the project, the people, the Irish laborers and their connection to this Virginia landmark location. Questions on the program or location please call Dan Begley 804-740-5631. **DON'T MISS IT!** (From - <http://clannmhorr.blogspot.com/>)

November 13th – PUB SUPPER: The IAS will return to (<http://www.finnmccoolsrichmond.com/> - Finn McCool's at the corner of W. Broad and Cox 4028J Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060 804-217-8167 (it faces Broad Street from the Shoppes at Innsbrook). Join us for Nosh & Natter and a chance to hear traditional Irish music from our own IAS members that make up "Turf Fire". Come between 6:30 & 7 – Great Music and the wonderful stories 'behind' the songs. Call or email Joan Finnegan to let her know how many are coming. <mailto:jfinn@hotmail.com>-804-840-0080. **COUNT ME IN JOAN!** (You call her now and join in the fun!)



About our upcoming Christmas Party – if you can help with set up or clean up – please call Karon Bell at 8004-982-7835. You know the old... "Many Hands". Thanks!

IAS MEMBERS – ACT NOW!!! It's time to send in your nomination for **The 2010 IAS MVP Award** – **all must be received by Nov. 14 so please email or call today.** For our newer members, this award is to recognize an IAS member who, for the past year, has worked to promote and support the IAS and it's events through exemplary enthusiasm, individual effort and involvement. The recipient of this award will be based on the **nominations submitted by IAS members.** The Awards Committee will receive and tally your nominations. The award presentation will be made at the Christmas Party on December 4th. Nominations must be received **NO LATER THAN November 14th.** Please contact Jim with your nomination for the member that you feel best meets the spirit of the award. You can call or email Jim your nomination.

Jim Bandeleian - jbandeleian@gmail.com (804-347-0924)

There are lots and lots of people in the IAS that work hard all year to make your IAS experience better. You see them at the events, read about them in the newsletter and in one way or another you have enjoyed the fruits of their labor. This is your chance to recognize those efforts– it only takes a phone call or an email... how about it! Jim is standing by waiting to hear from you – please don't keep him waiting! ☺

SEE YOU AT THE World Renowned IAS Christmas Party/Silent Auction - December 4th from 6:00'ish to 11:00'ish. The party will be held again at the Virginia Power Boat Association clubhouse, a warm and festive setting and plenty of parking too! The Boat Club is located at 4051 Old Gun Road East, Midlothian, VA. 23113. Directions from the Huguenot Bridge: Stay on Huguenot Road until you reach the intersection of Old Gun Road. There's a traffic light there. Turn right. The road will twist & turn. **Go 1.7 miles.** The boat club is on the right. There's a sign, but caution—it's not very large or well lit. Attendance is free – but we ask that you bring a "Dish to Share" – a dessert, an appetizer, your specialty. **It's BYOB** – but we'll have the mixers available. There is also some Irish music from Turf Fire. This is our major Party of the year and we hope to see you there!

One more thing, in the true spirit of Christmas, we request donations of canned goods or other non-perishable foods for an IAS donation to the Central Virginia Food Bank. It's a pretty tough time for a lot of people this year –so just bring what you can – It always feels good to do for others who need some help.

(NO PARKING ON THE GRASS, & DRIVE SAFELY!)

The IAS Silent Auction at the Christmas Party: The excitement of the Silent Auction awaits you and President, Gloria Cahen is encouraging our members to again donate Irish themed items for the auction. Remember, you can donate an item, a service, or even anything that you can get someone else to donate! (Restaurant dinners, services, etc.) In the past we've had some great items – Irish jewelry, Irish books, Irish prints, An Irish Santa decoration, an Irish coverlet/throw, a week at a cottage in the Shenandoah Valley, a week at a one of two offered cottages in Ireland and more! Again this year there will be plenty of great surprises to tempt you! The Auction will go on during the Party and bidding will end **AT 9:00** so get there early to view and bid on all the goodies! There truly is something for everyone!

Items can be donated and delivered to us in several ways.

- You can bring your item to the Christmas party (Please bring it early so there is time to display it and for us to prepare the Bid Card.
- You can bring your item to the November 4th meeting and we'll get it to the Christmas party for you.
- If you need something picked up, you can contact Karon Bell at 804-982-7835 or Nancy Emig at 804-323-6415 or <mailto:bearfan46@verizon.net> and we'll try to get over to pick it up. (Please let us know if it is oversized or very heavy)

This is our major fund-raiser for the year. Proceeds are used to secure speakers for our meetings, postage and printing supplies, Insurance, the goodies supplied by our wonderful Hospitality ladies at every meeting and much more.

A Short Note Of Thanks, I want to thank everyone for all their efforts during the Highland Games. Especially Jim Bandleian, who opened his ice chest to everyone since the price of Stout at the Festival was \$8 (and it wasn't even Guinness!) Jim's selfless act toward his fellow members was greatly appreciated. Dan Begley.

From Nancy – Along with alerts about upcoming events – this is a sincere request that you take a minute and do these things to help out. There is a lot for you to think about and **DO** this month. **1.** The IAS needs your input on the selection of the **IAS MVP – Most Valuable Person** for the past year call or email Jim B. **2.** Mark that calendar for the Nov. 4th meeting & the Dec. 4th Christmas Party. **3.** Look around for a donation for our fund raising Silent Auction. **4.** Call Joan with your reservation count for the November 13th PUB Supper. **5.** Finally, – send that note off to Jim Mahone in response to what you'd like to see in this newsletter. The IAS does need your input to **“BE”** the organization you want! Thanks!

The October IAS Meeting - Denise the Magic Story Teller! It's hard to describe what a wonderful program we enjoyed at this meeting. Local Storyteller and Celtic harpist, Denise Bennett, mesmerized all in attendance with wonderful Irish stories, beautiful harp music a warm and melodious singing voice and a vibrant personality that filled the entire room (and all this with a broken harp string no less!). Denise brought laughs, tears, sighs, giggles and gasps – what a cool night! If you missed it – I am so sorry. But because of the broken harp string, Denise felt she wasn't able to deliver – according to her – the best program possible, and she is coming back to do another session for us. Hopefully, we can schedule her on a different weeknight or maybe even a weekend so that we might get some members who can't normally come on Thursday night.

One very important note – Many, Many thanks for this program go to our IAS member Kathy Mincz. Kathy suggested Denise for a program meeting and put Herculean efforts into making it happen. You might remember Kathy from her wonderful presentation at a previous story night when she “wowed” us with “The Legend of the Irish Selkie”. Thanks Kathy, it was a wonderful night and most appreciated. The rest of you make every effort to come for the next “Denise Show!” You will be so glad you did.



Here I am, in my new outfit, slaving away on the next issue of the Claddagh and waiting to hear your responses to last month's request for your input on the newsletter. If you haven't sent that note to Jim Mahone on what you like- or dislike – or what you'd change or what you'd add about the newsletter. Please do so now (Your feedback is important!)
(jim.mahone@comcast.net)

PBS/NPR – If you would like to volunteer to man phones for the upcoming Telethon at WCVE on November 15th between 8 & 10pm – please contact Karon Bell at 804-982-7835. It may be a show about the Irish Tenors or the Irish at Ellis Islands. I couldn't find all the details at the website – the station contact is 804-320-1301

Did you know? Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of Treasure Island, took a supply of Guinness with him on his travels to Samoa?



Samhain Celebrations and Games –

(Brian Witt (Shamrock Club of Wisconsin))

November 1 is *Samhain*, the Celtic New Year. It is that time when the harvest is collected, the days are getting shorter and darker, and the cool of winter is knocking at the door. *Samhain* means “Summers’ End.”

It was also the festival of the dead, when the boundary between the world of the living and that of the dead was the thinnest, and with the slaughter of animals and the death of crops, it allowed the dead to reach back through the veil of life and death.

For those of us living in a world of continual light, it is hard to imagine what the darkness meant to the Gaels. With light that was provided only by the hearth and tallow lamps, which had to be preserved for the whole of winter, it was the beginning of a season of night noises, cold and preserved food.

In the country year, *Samhain* marked the first day of winter, when the herders led the cattle and sheep down from summer’s pastures to be closer to home. Hay that would feed them during the winter would be stored in the farm’s outbuildings, secured against winter storms. The harvest had to be gathered, as the faeries and pucas would attack every growing plant with their breath, killing whatever standing crops might remain.

Members of the household worked together to create the stores of salted meat and preserves. Peat and wood for winter fires were stacked high near the hearth.

Samhain was when farmers would check their herds and grain supplies, and decide which animals would be slaughtered. It is a custom still observed by many who farm and raise livestock because it is when meat will keep until the freeze would come. With the death of summer grasses, it was harder to keep cattle fed without being able to forage.

Bonfires played a large part in the festivities. The bonfires were fueled using the dead stalks of crops, and other organic material. On occasion, the bones of cattle were tossed in, in homage to the pre-Christian sacrifice rituals. Villagers would extinguish all other fires in the village. The hearths of homes were lit using the bonfire flames, therefore creating a bond amongst the families. When two bonfires were built side by side, people would walk between the fires in a purification ritual.

With death came a desire to avoid the dead. People would dress to avoid having their families come back and

impose upon them, so they would dress up in costumes or masks to disguise themselves. In Scotland, and some parts of Northern Ireland, men and women would exchange clothing, in case dead relatives, or those who had a reason to hurt the living, could recognize them by their wardrobe. The resultant confusion of those who passed on would protect them.

The carving of turnips into lanterns with faces was also done to protect those who were carrying them. These turnips were not the red variety, but rather a larger white turnip, more closely related to the rutabaga. It is also called the swede. (It wasn’t until the Irish and Scots came to America that they found the pumpkin was better for such purposes.)

With the costumes came the guisers, men, and then children, in disguise, who would go door to door looking for food or drink, or money. At the time of mass transatlantic Irish and Scottish immigration that popularized Halloween in North America, Halloween in Ireland and Scotland had a strong tradition of guising and pranks.

Games and divination practices are associated with *Samhain*. Among them were those dealing with marriage, weather, and the coming fortunes for the next year. One such method was to slice an apple in half, and then eat it by candlelight before a mirror. A future spouse would then appear over your shoulder.

Dunking for apples was a marriage divination. The first person to bite an apple would be the first to marry the next year. Peeling an apple was a sign of your life span, as the longer the unbroken apple peel, the longer your life was destined to be.

Dreaming stones would be collected with closed eyes from a stream, while saying, “I will lift the stone, As Mary lifted it for her Son, For substance, virtue, and strength; May this stone be in my hand, Till I reach my journey’s end,” would be placed under a pillow, a dream would be asked for that would give guidance or a solution to a problem, and the stones would bring it.

Enjoy the start of the new Celtic year. Enjoy the bounty of the harvest, and have a happy Halloween.

And always remember to show your



MARK YOUR CALENDARS – Click on links in calendar and you can hear song selections from the artists
And ALWAYS click the link directly below to get the latest updates on upcoming events

<http://richmondias.org/index.php?content=upcoming>

Friday, Nov 5th Williamsburg Library “Battlefield Band” Concert - \$25 7:30 pm	Under their banner <i>Forward</i> with Scotland’s Past, Battlefield Band has been performing on the international scene for more than three decades, inspired by their rich heritage of Celtic music and fired by the strength of the modern Scottish cultural scene. Their music is played regularly on National Public Radio’s Thistle and Shamrock http://www.battlefieldband.co.uk/index.htm
Nov. 6th St. Andrew’s Band Urbanna Oyster Fest	Our members who also are part of the St. Andrew’s Pipe & Drum Society will appear in the parade at the Urbanna Oyster Festival. The website has more information on the parade that the festival. http://www.urbannaoysterfestival.com/
Sat – Nov 13th Turf Fire at Finn McCool’s 7pm – 10pm	IAS members, Mary Smith & John Robison, known as “Turf Fire” will be playing traditional Irish & Celtic Music – stop in and support both the Pub and our members! Finn’s is Located at the Shoppes at Innsbrook (Corner of West Broad and Cox Road) (804) 217-8167. Website to check Menu - www.finnmccoolsrichmond.com
Nov 21st. St. Andrew’s Band Ashland Holiday Parade	St. Andrew’s Pipers (including our IAS folks) help to kick off the festivities that start at 2:30 on Thompson Street and it moves to John Gandy Elementary School. Tons of entrants and the word is there is a ‘chubby’ guy from the North Pole as Honored Guest... hmmmmmm!
Dec 1st – 7pm Williamsburg Library Celtic Film Series Free	December Bride (1991, not rated) -- Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland Street A proud Irish servant girl rebels against her strict upbringing by having love affairs with two brothers at the same time – risking happiness, reputation and safety.
December 3rd 7:30 Danú Christmas In Ireland An Nollaig in Éirinn U of R Modlin Center 804 289-898	This acclaimed Irish ensemble celebrates a traditional Irish Christmas and continue to thrill with virtuoso players on fiddle, flutes, button accordion, percussion, and the gorgeous voice of Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh. Danú returns to the Modlin Center with dancers and other special guests. Bring the entire family to enjoy this glorious Irish celebration of Christmas. Tickets – Adults - \$34, Seniors - \$32, Children \$17 –Click on the link below for a taste of their music It is the best 4 minutes you’ll spend this week.. Keep a sharp eye for the dancing couple at the end. Tickets on Sale – October 22nd http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0RInGkoMQk&feature=related
December 4th IAS Christmas Party 6-ish to 11-ish Va. Power Boat Club 4051 Old Gun Rd East – Midlothian, VA 23113 DON’T MISS IT!	The party will be held again at the Virginia Power Boat Club Association clubhouse, a warm and festive setting for us. The boat club is located at 4051 Old Gun Road East, Midlothian, VA. 23113. Here are directions from the Huguenot Bridge: Stay on Huguenot Road until you reach the intersection of Old Gun Road. There’s a traffic light there. Turn right. The road will twist & turn. Go 1.7 miles . The boat club is on the right. There’s a sign, but caution —it’s not very large or well lit. NO PARKING ON THE GRASS, & DRIVE SAFELY! Attendance is free – but we ask that you bring a “Dish to Share” – a dessert, an appetizer, your specialty... it’s all good! It’s BYOB – but we’ll have the mixers available. PLEASE BRING A NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEM TO DONATE TO THE VIRGINIA FOOD PANTRY.
Dec 4th – Irish Music Session Finn McCool’s 8pm	Bernard Farrell invites all to the Irish session. Finn McCool’s is located in The Shoppes at Innsbrook at the corner of West Broad and Cox Road. You can visit their website at (www.finnmccoolsrichmond.com)
December 18th, Richmond Folk Music Congregation Or Ami 9400 Huguenot Road Richmond, VA	Celebrate the Holiday Season with dance music by Richmond's favorite Klezmer ensemble - Klezm'Or'Ami'm , and rousing traditional Irish party music by Turf Fire . What is "Celtic Klezmer"? Well, described by Mick Malone -imagine if the Kellys and the Cohens were to put on a block party! Although it might seem a strange combination, these were two groups who not only came to America to build a better life, but really felt they had no homeland to go back to". Ticket pricing to be announced. It will be worth it to hear “Danny Boy” in Yiddish!