



AN SEANACHAÍ

NEWSLETTER OF THE AICS

VOLUME 83, ISSUE 2, OCTOBER 2022

Seanacháí is the name of our newsletter.
It is a Gaelic word that refers to a storyteller or historian.

The Seanacháí is usually published most months of the year and sent out via email as well as posted on our website.
Email us at irishclubpdx@gmail.com if you'd like to be added to our monthly email list for the Seanacháí.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy October!

It was so wonderful seeing everyone at our September meeting, and what a treat to hear from Gemma Whelan about her new book! This October, we'll be hosting a booth at Ceili of the Valley's Samhain Festival, which is sure to be wonderful, check out more info later in this newsletter.

Planning for St. Patrick's Day is beginning - if you would like to help, just send us an email at irishclubpdx@gmail.com. We would love to hear your ideas, and we can always use more help! It's a big event, and we are so looking forward to returning to our in-person format this March!

Christina White
Current President of AICS

WELCOME TO NEW AICS MEMBERS

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to Holly Griffith, Kellie Raydon, and William Joseph Milles, who have recently joined us. Welcome to the All-Ireland Cultural Society, and thank you for supporting Irish culture!

MEETING OCTOBER 15TH WITH ERIK KILLOPS

Our meeting this month will be on Saturday, October 15th, at 3:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the Stamp Society Building (4828 NE 33rd Ave), but we will also offer a Zoom option for you to log in remotely if you would prefer. We will send out Zoom info that week.

For our program after the meeting, we will be hearing from Erik Killops about his college experience studying abroad at the University of Limerick, Ireland, from 2006-2010, and completing his Bachelor's degree Irish Music and Dance. After he returned to Portland, he created the band [Na Rósaí](#), a most popular Irish trad band for dances, concerts and receptions. He will also play a few tunes on his fiddle for us.



YOU'RE INVITED TO
THE ALL-IRELAND CULTURAL SOCIETY'S

WINTER LUNCHEON

When: Sunday, December 4th, 1-3 pm

Where: Old Spaghetti Factory, 715 S Bancroft St, Portland, OR 97239

Cost: \$30 per member and \$35.00 for non members

RSVP: Please make your reservation with us by November 28th by [completing this form](#). No reservation is final until we receive payment, either by check (mail to All-Ireland Cultural Society of Oregon, PO Box 3411, Portland, OR 97208-3411) or [pay online via our PayPal](#).

Meal Info:

All meals come with crisp salad, hot fresh baked bread, and spumoni ice cream. No host bar for alcohol.

- Manager's Favorite - Pair two of the Classic Sauces to create your favorite combination. Choices include Marinara, Rich Meat Sauce, White Clam Sauce, Mushroom Sauce or Mizithra Cheese & Browned Butter. If you are a vegetarian, this is the option for you.
- Chicken Marsala - A freshly seasoned breast of tender Chicken with Mushroom Marsala Wine Sauce. Served alongside spaghetti with Mizithra Cheese and Browned butter sauce.
- Baked Lasagna - Layers of noodles, Marinara sauce, ground beef and pork and four delicious cheeses.

We look forward to seeing you all and kicking off the holiday season together.

CAN YOU HELP AT OUR BOOTH IN SALEM?

We will be hosting a booth at Ceili of the Valley's Samhain Festival on Saturday, October 22nd, from 10 am to 5 pm. We would love to have more volunteers to help run the booth! If you are available for all or part of the day and would like to help out, please email us at irishclubpdx@gmail.com. This is wonderful local festival and a great opportunity to get our club more visibility in the community. [Learn more on their website here.](#)

SAMHAIN: A CELTIC TRADITION

by Dorothy Foley

Samhain, or Halloween as we've come to know it, is a pagan festival originating in an ancient Celtic spiritual tradition. The tradition held that at this approximate time of year, October 31-November 1, a duality was observed: the harvest was welcomed and celebrated but it ushered in a dark, dormant part of the year. That duality extended to the barriers between the physical world and the spiritual world, believed to have momentarily relaxed so spirits could dance lightly between the two. During this time hearth fires were never extinguished, instead allowed to burn out while the harvest was gathered. When the harvest was completed harvesters and gleaners joined the Druidic priests to light a community fire using a wheel that would cause friction, sparking flames. The wheel was considered a representation of the sun and central to their prayer ritual. Cattle were sacrificed and participants took a flame from the communal bonfire back home to relight the hearth. This was a three-day celebration that included the dead as well as the living. As there were now no barriers between them the living prepared offerings that were left outside villages and fields for fairies and Sidhs. As ancestors were expected to cross into the living Celts would dress as animals and monsters so the fairies were not tempted to kidnap them.



Some specific monsters were associated with the mythology surrounding Samhain, including a shape-shifting creature called a Pukah that devoured offerings from the harvest fields; the Lady Gwyn, a headless woman dressed in white who chased night wanderers accompanied by a black pig; The Dullahan who sometimes appeared as an impish creature and sometimes as a headless man on horseback who carried his head, riding a flame-eyed horse. The Dullahan was a death omen to anyone to whom he appeared. A group of hunters known as The Faery Host might also show themselves during Samhain and kidnap people. Similar are the Sluagh who would come from the west to steal souls. Jack-o-lanterns were lit to ward off some of these other-world visitors and the mischief they could cause.

So, if you find some of today's Halloween costumes and traditions like mischief night outlandish, look no further than our Celtic ancestors.

INFO ON COMMUNITY EVENTS

Want to see up-to-date info on local Irish events, music, dance, language, etc? [Visit the new "Our Community" page on our website!](#) It will be updated monthly, if not even more often, so you can visit that page at any time for up-to-date info. Plus, you can always watch [our AICS Facebook page](#) for even more updates and event info!

IRISH MUSIC AND DANCING - REELS

by Joan MacNeill

While the signature Irish musical form is the jig, reels are a very essential, important part of Irish music. It wouldn't be the same without them.

Jigs and reels together are the mainstay holding up the Irish musical tradition. Musicians love to play them, and there is little chance of running out of tunes, as they number in the thousands, with new ones constantly emerging. Some say reels are now the most popular tune types with Irish session players and dance bands. The formally termed "reels" are played in 4/4 time, each bar of about a second's duration, for dancing, often faster in sessions. Some tunes called reels are actually in other rhythms, at the creators's whims. Dancers are tolerant; they can, when needed, do a particular dance, jig or reel, to either rhyrhm. Some steps are more suited to their intended rhythm, however.

The English word reel is based on an Old Norse word referring to a weaver's rod, on which warp threads are wound. Hence the word is primarily used for a spool for long linear items. A spin-off (har, couldn't resist) meaning is to turn or revolve. As a dance, the word derives from a Swedish word meaning to stagger, or move from side to side while walking. Related dance moves are waves, alternating over and under arms when couples are moving in opposite directions up and down a long line. And a weaving dance where individuals or couples alternate passing each other on the right then left, when moving in opposite directions in the line. These moves were the original building blocks of the dances which became reels. They could be done in lines or circles. One of the English meanings for the general term "reel" means to stagger, which harks back to the Swedish term.

Although there are still many reels performed in circles or lines, a more common formation is squares of four couples. This is the ultimate form of the quadrille dance, which started in Europe, then migrated to the British Isles and Ireland. The connection, although coincidental, between the sounds "reel" and "quadrille" is reinforced by the use, in early quadrilles, of the moves used in early reels. Words are shifty and funny; perhaps both possible sources have worked simultaneously on the current name.

"Reel" is *ruidhle* or *ruidhleadh* (REE-luh) in Scotch Gaelic, and *ríl* (reel) in Irish, both obviously adapted from the English. Another Irish word is *cor* (core), meaning twist, turn, leap, or, the dance, reel. *Cor* is used fequently for reel in older, more traditional texts, such as the Irish names for classic céili dances. For example the popular *Cor na Siog* (core nuh SHE-og, Reel of the Fairies) "Fairy Reel". *Céili* (KAY-lee) is of course, the Irish word for social gathering, more commonly meaning dancing in Irish culture nowadays, and traditional entertainment in Scotch culture.

Some tried and true, old favorite reels are "The Wind that Shakes the Barley", "The Maid Behind the Bar" (also known as (Judy's Reel)), "The Fairy Reel" ("The Fairy Dance" in Scotland, "Old Molly Hare" in Appalachia), "Connaughtman's Rambles" ("Go to the Devil and Shake Yourself"), "De'il Among the Tailors" ("Devil's Dream"), "Mrs (or Miss) McLeod". And some tunes, played frequently by well-known musicians, became their signature pieces. One is "Mason's Apron", done staggeringly well by famous Belfast fiddler Seán McGuire. His breakdown speed and special techniques created the Gold Standard for the tune. Another is "Drowsy Maggie", a well-known reel adopted by those Irish music global ambassadors, The Chieftans. Chicago police chief Francis O'Neill gathered Irish musicians into the force in the early 20th century, and passionately collected from them over 3,500 tunes, mostly jigs and reels. These are available in various formats, including two huge books.

You Tube is an amazing source of audio/video recordings of the music. Once you start looking, it leads to an endless array of choices. There are also music scores and lyrics on the internet.

ADVERTISEMENTS

If you have a business or a service to offer to our members, we can include your business card for \$25 per year.
An Seanachai goes to more than one hundred local households.
For more information, email us at irishclubpdx@gmail.com!



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ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR THE AICS

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/AICSOregon

The AICS is a federally recognized 501(3)(c) non-profit public benefit cultural organization. The AICS is listed with the State of Oregon as a non-profit corporation. Donations and contributions made to the AICS may be tax deductible for income tax purposes.

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