

Na Scéalta

Irish Association of Tasmania Newsletter

May Traditions

In Irish Culture May is probably one of the most celebrated of months in the Calendar Year.

Ireland, with its still strong Christian Traditions, celebrates May as the month of Mary and many processions take place in her honour.

Statues of Mary, traditionally depicted in blue and white robes, are carried aloft along flower and petal strewn pathways, through church grounds and sometimes down lanes.

Similar traditions are to be found in Spain.

Here some of the statues of *La Virgen* are huge and need to be carried on poles by armies of men surrounded by a screen.

In return for this feat, the men receive a special blessing.

Back in The British

Isles maybe the most popular hymn heard is

“Bring flowers of the rarest,

Bring blossoms the fairest,

From garden and woodland and hillside and dale,

Our full hearts are swelling,

Our glad voices telling

The praise of the loveliest Flower of the Vale.

O Mary we crown Thee with blossoms today,

Queen of the Angels and Queen of the May.

Rpt “

This has a traditional melody and the lyricist is anonymous.

It is, however, a fine representation of all that is encapsulated in so many of the May time ballads and folk-songs in the Traditional Music of

Europe, and especially that of Ireland.

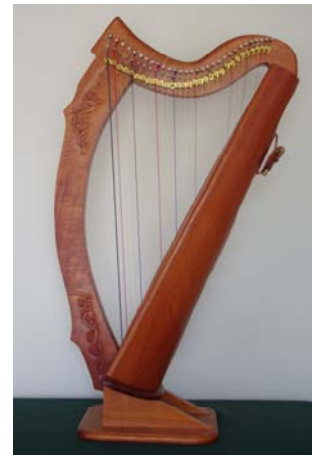
As The First Nation of Australia has its Dreamtime, so the Irish People has its own *Ceo draíochta*, The Magic Mist.

Irish Slow Airs such as *Ceo draíochta* transport the listener to another ancient world and in this genre falls the splendid *May Morning Dew*.

As a Slow Air it has the slowest, almost imperceptible pulse serving for a rhythm.

As such it produces an image of diamond studded dew drops bejewelling a silver coated meadow as the first rays of the rising sun, *An Fáinne Geal an Lae*, stretch across the hills.

An Fáinne Geal an Lae, literally *The Bright Ring of The Day* is a beautiful air and song, more *cont. p3*



Bealtaine

May 2009

Na Scéalta Mission Statement

- *Na Scéalta aims to maintain the highest standards of equality and maintain a policy of non-discrimination*
- *Na Scéalta aims to provide accurate information and reports of events concerning The Irish Association of Tasmania Inc.*
- *Na Scéalta aims to achieve proper and appropriate use of language and grammar in both English and Irish .*
- *Na Scéalta aims to be available in the week before the month of issue.*

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Irish Association Meeting 28th April 2009

The Irish Association of Tasmania Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, 28th April 2009 at 7pm at The New Sydney Hotel.

A number of matters were discussed and one of those issues is printed here.

- Christmas in July

It is now something of a tradition that The Irish Association holds a special Christmas in July event.

It is very much a family

occasion with games and activities for children as well as the Traditional Christmas dinner.

In recent years there has been a Traditional Session leading up to the arrival of Father Christmas.

It does mean that The Committee needs to know how much interest there is in holding this event.

Do you think you can

help or contribute in any way?

Please can readers inform the Committee of expressions of interest.

Also it be a great help if they could indicate how they might assist in the preparation and execution of this event.

The next Committee Meeting is to take place at 7pm on Tuesday 26th May at The New Sydney Hotel.

News about *your* Na Scéalta

Apologies are tendered for the late publication of *Na Scéalta*.

It had been hoped to present this issue by Friday, 1st May but a combination of a late shift change and a breakdown in communications means that it is a day late.

Gabh mo leithscéal!

Many thanks again to those readers who have been kind enough to provide more feedback about the newsletter.

Again all of it has been very positive and encouraging.

The Editor wishes take this opportunity to reiterate to readers and members alike that this newsletter has been revived and is very much a healthy living organism.

If readers would like to contribute articles, letters or pictures please

feel cordially invited.

Also please consider mentioning any events which might be of interest to the community in general and especially The Irish Association membership.

So, if you have pictures of any events like The Craic or one of the sessions, maybe somebody's birthday celebrations, or even a particular landscape shot, please feel free to share them with *Na Scéalta* readers.

This issue is not as pictorial as recent issues.

A very expensive camera is undergoing surgery at the moment, but is expected to make a full recovery.

Any material can be addressed to the Editor and dropped off at The New Sydney Hotel. *Eagarthóir*

Calligraphy

You might remember reading that Brian Owens was offering Irish Calligraphy classes in the April issue of *Na Scéalta*.

There was one response which, although affirmative, is not sufficient support to warrant running the classes.

It is possible that with the Easter holiday Season and people managing to take advantage of a break that this was the reason for the weak response.

If anyone would like to learn how to make Greetings Cards with their own beautifully handwritten messages please contact Brian Owens through *Na Scéalta*.

Alistair has kindly offered the use of the Chapel as The Scriptorium for free, so costs would be minimal.

Cont from p1. commonly known as *The Dawning of The Day*, a song dating from 1847.

In his haunting love ballad, *Raglan Road*, Kavanagh writes of “her own dark hair, like clouds over fields of May.”

Here he is alluding to the blossom of the Hawthorn, also called The Maytree, which bursts into blossom after the leaves have opened.

The white, or pink flowers are called May Blossom, or May.

Hawthorn is also called White-thorn, and conversely, its close relative, The Blackthorn or Sloe, blossoms before its leaves have opened.

This is the origin of the beautiful air *Easter Snow*, as it appears that the bare branches are covered with

snow.

Also, apart from his rich poetry Kavanagh’s genius was to shape his poetry to the tune of *Fáinne Geal an Lae*, without compromising the metre of the original.

Another beautiful ballad using a May theme is *O’Reilly from the Co. Leitrim*, sometimes called *The Phoenix of The Co. Leitrim*.

The opening verse equals any for its descriptive qualities;

“When first I came unto this country,

It was to view the sweet flowers gay.

I fell in love with a pretty fair maid,

She appeared to me like the queen of the May.”

Lá Bealtaine, May Day, signifies the beginning of Summer in The Celtic Calendar and throughout Europe various celebrations would, and still, take place.

Some of these include Morris Dancing and Maypole Dancing.

In the southwest of England there are *Hobby Horses* which dance through the streets of small ports like Padstow or Minehead.

The Quantock Morris Men in South West Somerset have a dancer dressed as a giant red stag, and they dance all day in local villages.

In this frenetic modern age it must be hoped that these traditions do not vanish, and that one might still be carried by a tune to the world of The Ancients and Magic Mists.

Tune of The Month - The Sweets of May



This month The Tune of The Month is appropriately named The Sweets of May.

It is a fast dance tune called a slide and has specific steps which are danced to this particular piece of music.

Perhaps readers will remember that this was the theme tune to an Australian TV series about early settlers.

It was called either Bushrangers or Bushwackers and was shown on British TV about 30 years ago.

Slides, and also polkas are very popular tunes and are an integral part of the set dancing steps of Co. Kerry and Co. Cork.

In recent years there has been a resurgence in set dancing and many dances have been saved.

Irish Music in The New Sydney Hotel Calendar of Events

With Easter and The National Folk Festival gone by the winter Saturday afternoons will be warmed by the continuing Traditional Irish Music Session at The New Sydney Hotel.

It's a chance to mix and catch up with friends and play a few tunes.

For some it's also a chance to try out some new songs or tunes.

It's advisable to get along early these days as the session tends to be well under way by 3.30pm.

This certainly makes for the chance to play more music.

The To'rags, comprising local musicians will be playing at The New Sydney Hotel on Saturday evening at 8.30pm.

They combine driving arrangements of tunes with some stirring and at times, sensitive, singing and have established quite a following as a Traditional band on the Hobart scene.

The Craic is back!

This popular evening takes place at The New Sydney Hotel on Wednesday 20th May at 8.30pm.

It has gone back to more of its original format as a small variety concert.

There have been some dynamic permutations of musicians and singers recently.

It gives some of the younger musicians and singers a chance to present their material as well as the opportunity to hear some of the more experienced players to play and sing.

However it is important for performers to play an active rôle instead of leaving it to the organizer to chase people up.

It does offer the chance to perform to an audience and has seen some wonderful and really high quality performances take place over recent years.

Beginners' Irish Music Classes

These classes continue to take place on the second and fourth Mondays of the month.

They are free of charge and aspiring players do not have to be able to read music.

For those who can, music is provided free of charge, thanks to The New Sydney Hotel.

The aim of these classes is to provide a relaxed atmosphere in which to learn a couple of tunes each fortnight. Also there is the chance to learn about the origins and background to the tunes.

The evenings begin with a small recap session to get the fingers and memory working before embarking on the new tunes for that particular class.

They classes start at 7pm and take place in the Chapel, upstairs at The New Sydney Hotel, and last about two hours.

Irish Association of Tasmania Calendar of Events

Fri	1st	May	Lá Bealtaine – May Day	
Sat	2nd	May	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Mon	4th	May	IAOT Quiz	Registration 7.45pm
Sat	9th	May	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Sat	9th	May	The To'rags	8.30pm
Mon	11th	May	Beginners' Irish Music Classes	7.00pm
Sat	16th	May	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Wed	20th	May	The Craic is back	8.30pm
Sat	23rd	May	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Mon	25th	May	Beginner's' Irish Music Classes	7.00pm
Sat	30th	May	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Mon	1st	June	IAOT Quiz	Registration 7.45pm
Sat	6th	June	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Mon	8th	June	Beginners Irish Music Classes	7.00pm
Tues	9th	June	Feast of St. Columba, Patron Saint of Ireland	
Sat	13th	June	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm
Sat	20th	June	Traditional Irish Music Session	3.30pm

Footnotes

Thank you again to Alistair Derham and the team at The New Sydney Hotel for all their help; Alistair, Mick Lynch, and Peter Grubb for their contributions, advice and assistance in putting this issue to bed.

Deadlines are working successfully so will be similar this month. The deadline for the June Issue is **6pm, Friday, 23rd May.**

Go raibh maith agaibh, Sin é!

If you think your friends might like to join the Irish Association of Tasmania, simply invite them to leave their name and address at The New Sydney Hotel, Hobart. Memberships \$10 ind, \$20 fam. **Support The Irish Association of Tasmania!**

Irish Association of

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