



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

You Never Miss The Water Until The Well Runs Dry!

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

GROWING UP AS A “GARSÚN” (small boy) in rural west Limerick, I often spent weekends and holidays in Ashford, County Limerick, with my grandparents Michael and Josephine O’Connor. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, small farm enterprises dotted the Irish countryside and most families “out in the country” held a few cows if they had the land to support them. My grandparents, into their sixties by then, were part of the population of small farmers that were quite happy managing three milking cows. It was really a pastime for them, as I heard my own parents say many times. They had no grandiose ideas about expanding their holdings or getting any bigger. Self-sufficiency was the order of the day on most Irish farms regardless of size, as the food harvested from the haggart came mostly in the form of vegetables: carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes, cabbage, onions, lettuce, and my favorite

after dinner custard topping—rhubarb. Eleven children were raised on the small holding (about five acres). My mother (Ita Reidy, née O’Connor) was the second youngest, and only two of her other siblings remained in Ireland; the rest emigrated to England in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Change in Rural Ireland

Looking back now, this period of my youth was a time of great transition in Ireland as the fabric of rural society based on an agricultural economy was being broken up. The large milk processing firms in the area like Kerry Co-Op and Dairygold commenced a process of rationalization and consolidation of farm milk collection by squeezing out the small farmer. Efforts were focused on the larger farmer with 50 or more milking cows. It just made economic sense. It was the start of what one might call the “Industrial Farm Complex” in Ireland.

Quiet in the Yard

Eventually, a combina-

tion of old age, and stringent rules around milk production from small holdings forced the shutdown of Nana and Granddad’s operation. This ensured that the “tabulated milk book” that recorded milk output every morning at Kantoher Creamery was soon relegated to the kitchen cupboard, and the cows sold off.

The cow house and milking machine went quiet, no more clanging of tankards in the yard in the morning or evening, and the electrical pump switch that brought water from the well remained in the off position. There were no more daily trips to the Creamery or Murray’s shop in Ashford on the way home for Bulls Eyes, Bon Bons, or Kojak Lollipops (the currency by which I was paid for my farmyard efforts and housework).

My grandparents didn’t last long after the cows left the yard. There was no reason to get up early in the morning or stay active outside of the

house, or to bother with the front yard, haggart, or fields anymore. The cows were gone and there wasn’t much else to do after that. They were forced into isolation, and disconnected from the world outside, beyond the regular visits from neighbors, friends, and family. There were no more regular trips to the Creamery to discuss world, national or local affairs. The shops too in the small village in Ashford all closed as the passing trade of Creamery folks dried up. It was as if the water in the well ran dry, and all you could do was lament its disappearance. You cannot turn back the hand of time to happier days, although we often find ourselves reminiscing back to how things were in by gone days.

Four Decades Later

And so here I am forty years later, in San Francisco, looking back to how the proverbial “well” of St Patrick’s celebrations ran dry during the last two years. We last celebrated the annual St Patrick’s Day in 2019 without public health restrictions. In the interim period, celebrations have been muted due to Covid-19 regulations. The pandemic has wreaked havoc worldwide, taking many lives, and causing all kinds of economic, cultural, and societal upheaval.

Call to Celebrate Again

However, we aim to put all that right this St Patrick’s season once again, to ensure a “full well” of Irish celebrations lifting up what it means to be Irish in a way that is refreshed and renewed. So come out and celebrate the return of the St Patrick’s Day festivities this year! Proudly hang an Irish flag from your home or business. Tell the world you are Irish and show how proud you are of your Irishness. Celebrate your Irish heritage by coming out to the parade and wearing the ‘green’ on Saturday, March 12 and on Thursday March, 17.

We look forward to hosting you for several of our Irish arts and cultural events at the Center this March which have

been energetically put together by Mark Burke, Chairman of St Patrick’s Committee along with support from the Board of Directors and team of volunteers. You can order Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinners online this year to eat at the Center or To Go.

2022 Grand Marshals

Hearty congratulations to Grand Marshal Jim Byrne, and Honorary Grand Marshals; Pat Aherne, Marie Doherty, Margaret Kerns, James “Frank” Masterson and Charlotte Shultz.

2025 Project Plans

The new Irish Center building plans were submitted to the San Francisco Planning Department on Thursday, February 17. This is a major milestone on the roadway to a new building. Well done to the Building Committee, and Dane Bunton and Nastaran Mousavi at Studio BANAA for all their efforts to date.

Leo T Walsh Scholarship

Applications for our annual scholarship program open this month, for 8th Graders and High School Seniors entering the next level of their education. Completed applications are due on March 17.

Summer Camp Registration

Registration is now open for the Annual Summer Camp taking place between June 13 and July 1 at St Cecilia’s School at 660 Vicente. Sign up here before March 15 for the Early Bird Special. www.irishcentersf.org/irish-camp/

New UICC Board Treasurer

We welcome to the UICC Board Patrick J Carlin, CPA, of Carlin & Associates. Patrick is coming on board to replace outgoing Treasurer Craig Viehweg, who has termed out and did not seek re-election as he plans to spend more time with his grandkids. Many thanks Craig for all your help, energy, and guidance over the past two years; it has been invaluable to the organization, most especially during the pandemic. Enjoy your retirement!

Enjoy the St. Patrick’s Season, and be safe!

IRISH CENTER SUMMER CAMP

JUNE 13TH TO JULY 1ST 3 WEEKS OF FUN

MUSIC, DRAMA, SINGING, PERFORMANCE & MOVEMENT, OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, ART AND SPORT.

INFORMATION: 415-860-1854

Held at St. Cecilia's School
660 Vicente Street,
San Francisco, CA 94116

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN ONLINE

www.irishcentersf.org/irish-camp/

Happy St. Patrick's Day

Gordon Mar
District 4 Supervisor

IRISH CENTER
2025 PROJECT
SAN FRANCISCO

Kevin Mullin
Speaker pro Tempore
of the California
State Assembly

Thank you for the Support!

*Sincere sympathy to the family and friends of
Tommy Clune (1933-2022), who passed away in January.
Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.
May his soul be seated on God's right hand.
—The UICC Board of Directors*

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Photographic Exhibition “Children Of The Free State” Opens March 10

FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL “Keepers of the Steps” exhibition during the month of January, the UICC hosts Irish artist and photographer Annie Holland this March with her “Children of the Free State” photographic exhibition. Annie’s talented sister Kathleen Holland will also join the exhibition with her beautiful jewelry.

Grand Opening Night is Thursday March 10, 6-9 pm and the ticket price includes admission, light appetizers, and proceeds help support cultural programs at the United Irish Cultural Center.

The exhibit will also be available on March 12, 13, and 17 during the UICC’s St Patrick’s Day festivities to showcase and discuss their work. See: <https://anniehollandsf.eventbrite.com>

About the Photographic Exhibition

Laois artist, Annie Holland had conversations with older people from rural Laois born before or just after 1922, taking photographic portraits and engaging in conversations about the past and the present. These conversations create the framework for the exhibition ‘Children of the Free State.’

The project offers an enquiry and perspective into ‘A Sense of Place’ the overarching theme of the Laois Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022. It encompasses and articulates our socio-cultural heritage through a range of art media. The photographic and video materials will form part of the Laois County Library Digital Repository and Archive.

Using photography and video, Annie focuses on how the process of documentation and storytelling can itself create space, physically and emotionally, for real dialogue and the narration of personal stories—past and present. She also explores old family photos, dating back generations, as the only tangible bridge that connects the past with the present and her photographs that will connect current and future generations.

Speaking about her work, Annie says: ‘I believe that the past of any human being is never permanent, but constantly being reconstructed in the present’.

See <http://www.anniehollandphotography.com> or <https://kathleenhollanddesigns.com>

culture ireland
cultúr éireann

promoting Irish arts worldwide
cur chun cinn ealaíona na hÉireann ar fud na cruinne



Photographs from the Recent ‘Keepers of the Steps’ Irish Dance Exhibition at the Center



Sisters Cathy Mibach and Connie Lynch-Sorensen dropped by the St. Francis room to visit the Keepers of the Steps exhibition.



Keepers Committee member Eileen Mize, with Cultural Programming Director, Anne Cassidy Carew and Librarian, Jennifer Drennan.



Frank Jordan and Jack Cleary, Irish step dancing at St. Anne’s Home on Lake Street, San Francisco in 1960.



Nonie Roche reviews a photo of herself as a young girl dancing in the 1960 St. Patrick’s Day Parade in San Francisco.

Irish Pipers Giving Back In The Community

THE SAN FRANCISCO IRISH PIPERS are now entering the busiest time of the year for their band playing members.

The St Patrick’s season is around the corner and a full turn out is expected for the Parade on Saturday March 12th and Thursday March 17th. There are several local parochial corned beef and cabbage dinners to play for as well.

This past spring the Pipers have had a busy time teaching the next generation of Pipers, as they have partnered with the UICC in providing tuition to young kids in the community that want to play the Irish pipes.

A big thank you to instructors: John Carlin, Alex Lentz and Mike Bowler who are teaching the young kids. A piping workshop for 12-18 year olds starts soon. Call Pat Ward on 415-225-4451 for more information.

Pictured above right is Mike Bowler teaching Tommy Harvey; below right is Irish pipe instructor John Carlin teaching Julian Farrah and Eoin O’Keeffe; and below is Alex Lentz playing with Tanner Manning and Brendan Mullen.



THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER & FIRE IN THE RING BOXING present

BOXING

Special Appearance by
Pro Boxers Charlie Sheehy & Callum Walsh

Amateur FIGHT NIGHT

April 16, 2022
6-10 pm

United Irish Cultural Center
St. Patrick’s Room
TICKETS MAR 1: www.IrishCenterSF.org