

**Comhaltas Ceóltoiri Éireann  
Tom Finucane Branch  
Rochester, New York**



## **Newsletter**

November/December 2021

### **Samhain agus Nollaig 2021**

An organization dedicated to the advancement of traditional Irish music, language, dance and culture

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### **Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

Election of officers

November 28, 2021 4:30 pm at Johnny's Irish Pub

1382 Culver Road, Rochester, NY

Ballot page 3



**Because of the success of vaccination against COVID-19, many sessions have opened with no restrictions. See pages 2 and 9 and the website and Facebook for details.**



Branch website: [www.irishrochester.com](http://www.irishrochester.com)

Facebook: rochester irish musicians association

**Watch your email for announcements of Irish music and cultural events.**



**Local IRISH MUSIC SESSIONS & Workshops****Last Sunday each month: 3 pm  
Johnny's Learners' Session with Mark Ballard**

A playlist of videos with the sheet music for this month's (and previous months') tunes is available on Facebook and [www.irishrochester.com](http://www.irishrochester.com).

**If you are not on the email list, contact Mark at [mark55ballard@gmail.com](mailto:mark55ballard@gmail.com)**

Now that Johnny's is open and Zoom attendance has fallen off, the Zoom option is discontinued (unless things change).

Every month on the Last Sun, until Mar 27, 2022:

Nov 28, 2021 03:00 PM

Dec 26, 2021 03:00 PM

Jan 30, 2022 03:00 PM

Feb 27, 2022 03:00 PM

Mar 27, 2022 03:00 PM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/join/98tyKuGtpj0tHNKcsR6CRpwMGo\\_oKO7wplhcggd6ukfoBC1FbiHOlbRrILMuKen-](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/98tyKuGtpj0tHNKcsR6CRpwMGo_oKO7wplhcggd6ukfoBC1FbiHOlbRrILMuKen-)

**The Last-Sunday-of-the-month Johnny's session (5 pm)**

**Back in-person.**

**Intermissions session** every Wednesday night in Geneseo is **back in-person.**

**CALENDAR of all events** <http://irishrochester.weebly.com/calendar.html>

**Facebook Event Links:**

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/RochesterIrishMusiciansAssociation/events>

**Barry's session is back on at the normal time,  
Saturdays 2:00 pm.**



## Annual General Meeting (AGM)

For the Tom Finucane (Rochester) Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

November 28, 2021 4:30 pm at Johnny's Irish Pub, 1382 Culver Road, Rochester, NY

Election of officers – nominations:

Cathairleach (Chair)	Mark Ballard
Leas-Cathairleach (Vice Chair)	open
Runai (Secretary)	Bill Hallahan
Cisteoir (Treasurer)	Dave Halligan
Michoír (Auditor)	Peg Halligan
Youth Protection Officer	Gavin Barry
Public Relations Officer	Jess Kamens

Anyone wishing to serve at any position or nominate someone for a position, please contact Dan McGrath at [danielmcgr@gmail.com](mailto:danielmcgr@gmail.com)

Other agenda items:

1. Membership
2. Discussion of what officer roles involve needs to happen.
3. Priorities for the next year:
  - sessions
  - concerts
  - workshops
  - dancing
  - song
  - language
  - performances
  - lending library
4. How will we make the Priorities actually HAPPEN in 2022? Establish stewards/coordinators if needed



**Concerts  
see page 8**

**Christmas Céilidh Band**



**Cuisle Mo Chroí**



From Irish America, November 6, 2021:

## Irish Pride Stands Astride the Atlantic

By Róisín Chapman  
IA Newsletter November 6, 2021



Community protest over closure of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum (Photo: Bonnie Weir/ Save Ireland's Great Hunger Museum Facebook)

### Protests over closure of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum

As the United States begins to return to a post-pandemic normality, the “end-emic” may not see the re-opening of one beloved institution for the Irish American community.

Protests have been held over the closing of Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. The museum, which displays the largest collection of famine artifacts, closed its doors in early 2020 at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

200 people attended the demonstration last weekend outside the museum which houses artifacts such as a sculpture, “Famine Mother and Children”, by John Behan, who has commissioned famous famine memorials throughout Ireland. Also included in the collection is a stained-glass window inscribed with “An Gorta Mór” which translates to “The Great Hunger.”



The museum was opened in 2012, spear-headed by former university President John L. Lahey. However, in 2019, Quinnipiac announced the museum had until June 2020 to prove it could become self-sufficient or face permanent closure.



“Burying the Child” by Lilian Lucy Davidson has been exhibited at Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum. (Courtesy of Quinnipiac University / Hartford Courant File Photo)

Turlough McConnell spokesperson for the committee to save Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum said the museum “was never intended as a money-making enterprise but as an educational enterprise.” McConnell expressed the committee’s desire to have the museum, in its entirety, moved to another location if the university was unwilling to reverse its decision. The protests held in support of the museum, desired not only to keep the vast collection of artifacts together but also to emphasize the relevance of the Great Hunger or the “Irish Potato Famine” within American culture.

Between 1845 and 1852, Ireland saw a dramatic decline in its population with 1 million people dying as a result of crop contamination and over 2 million people emigrating, primarily to North America. “The Great Hunger is Ireland’s definitive national story. It also is an American story because of the impact on America’s urban landscape. So many Americans trace their stories to famine refugees,” said McConnell.

The famine not only tells the story of Irish and American relations but also those of Britain and Ireland. As the potato blight ravaged the crop across Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain further compounded the suffering of the Irish nation.

In 1997, the office of Prime Minister Tony Blair released a statement in commemoration of the famine. “Those who governed in London at the time failed their people through standing by while a crop failure turned into a massive human tragedy.”

It was around this time that Mr. Lahey, who had been president of Quinnipiac since 1987, began to consider using the famine-related art collection he had acquired on behalf of the university to educate the American public on the atrocity. Mr. Lahey, who retired in 2018, released a statement on current President Judy Olian administration’s decision to close the museum. “I am perplexed why anyone in this day and time would even consider closing a museum dedicated to educating people about the evils of discrimination and bigotry.” Mr. Lahey continued, “In the case of Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum, whose mission is educating people about one of the worst cases of state-sponsored discrimination and bigotry in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the worst case of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic discrimination and bigotry in all of history.”

A [Facebook group](#) to support the museum was set up by McConnell in September and has since surpassed 2,100 members.



## Irish American Cultural Institute (IACI) events:

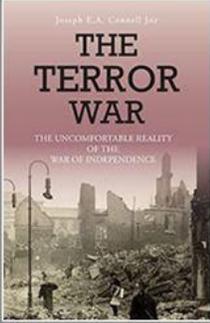
**New Book - Release Date March 2022**

Sponsored by



John Walsh Chapter

**Joseph E. A. Connell, Jr.**  
Irish Historian  
& Author

*The Terror War: The Uncomfortable Reality of the War of Independence*

Monday, Dec. 6, 2021  
7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. ET  
Friendly Sons of the Shillelagh, Belmar, NJ



### Larry Kirwan's "Paradise Square" is Heading to Broadway

For over 30 years, Larry Kirwan's voice provided the soundtrack for Irish American and Irish immigrant life. As the frontman for legendary Celtic rockers Black 47, Kirwan went from playing punky jigs and reels in small clubs in the Bronx to gigs on network TV and packed festivals and stadiums. (from October 30, Irish America)



## Sláinte! Feile Na Marbh – the origins of Halloween

By Edythe Preet (from October 30, Irish America)

That which we know as All Hallows Eve actually began as a harvest festival several millennia ago in Ireland. Though the evening's popular colors are black and orange, they might as well be Forty Shades of Green, for the customs of the celebration are Irish as the shamrock. The ancient Celtic year was divided by the four seasons and reckoned by a lunar calendar. The full moon that rose midway between the Autumnal Equinox and Winter Solstice was called Samhain. It was the most scary and sacred time of all. Winter was approaching, crops were dying, days were growing shorter, and the specter of death hung heavy in the air. Cattle were slaughtered and salted to feed the people through winter. Crops were gathered in and stored lest the shape-shifting Pooka, a nocturnal hobgoblin that delights in tormenting mortals, destroy the fruits of the field and bring on a season of famine. With storehouses full, the Celts marked the 3-day full moon period with revelry and ritual before facing the unknown.

Consumed with fear that they might be carted away to the land of the dead, the Irish lit huge bonfires to ward off evil forces. At night they listened to seanachies tell how the Gaels had defeated the magical Tuatha De Danaan. Undaunted, the Tuatha De plagued their conquerors with trickery, depriving them of milk and grain. Finally, a compromise was reached and the land was divided into two parts. The Gaels had won the right to live above ground; the fairy folk agreed to live underground. But on Samhain the veil between this and the Otherworld was thin. The fairies roamed at will, the mounds marking the entries to their dwelling places glowed with eerie light, and many a mortal disappeared, lured to live forever below ground with the fairy Sidhe. This was Feile Na Marbh, Feast of the Dead. Children born that night were blessed with 'double sight,' able to see and play with the fairies. Spirits appeared to ordinary folk advising them of future events. Long-dead ancestors sought the warmth of a hearth fire and communion with the living. In every window, flickering candles lit the way for lost souls.

In 432AD Saint Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, but the old ways persisted. Rome attempted to take the easy way out and absorbed the tradition into its own calendar. For centuries, the Church had honored its martyrs and saints on May 13, so in 844AD Pope Gregory IV transferred the saints' feast to November 1, renaming it All Hallows Day. Five hundred years later, Celtic descendants were still celebrating their 3-day Feast of the Dead. In the 14th century, Rome decreed November 2 would be known as All Souls Day and masses would be said for the departed who had not yet been admitted to heaven. In an effort to finally eradicate the ancient festival, October 31 was titled All Hallows Eve and installed on the Church calendar as a vigil of preparation for the 2-day religious observance.

Christianity had absorbed Samhain, but the Celtic ceremony of honoring the dead – now fixed on October 31st and November 1st and 2nd instead of the final harvest full moon – remained. It was still an occasion for feasting and revelry. It was still the night when souls roved free. And it was still the time to seek answers on things unknown.

Hollowed out turnips (which in Ireland are as big as pumpkins) were carved with fearsome faces, lit with candles, and placed in windows to scare away ghosts. People wore masquerades when out traveling to disguise themselves from creatures of the night. Youngsters went from house to house chanting for food for the poor in the name of Finn Mac Cuill, a tricky descendant of the Tuatha De Danaan.

Meals featured the fruits of the late harvest. No Hallows Eve dinner was complete without a steaming bowl of potato-cabbage Colcannon, crowned with a deep puddle of melted golden butter. Baked into the fruity Barm Brack dessert cake were fortune-telling tokens: a button for the bachelor, a coin for the rich man, a wooden



matchstick for the pauper, and a thimble for the spinster. And whoever found the cake's hidden gold ring would certainly marry within the coming year!

Nearly eight hundred years on, All Hallows Eve is yet the night for magic, mystery and merry making. Ghosts haunt the imagination and trick-or-treaters go begging for goodies from door to door.

### Traditional Barm Brack

1 3/4 cups raisins	1 3/4 cups golden raisins
3 3/4 cup dark brown sugar	1 cup cold tea
4 ounces candied citrus peel, minced	2 eggs, lightly beaten
Grated rind of 1 orange	2 tsp baking powder
8 tbsp melted butter	1/2 tsp cinnamon
4 cups flour	
1 tsp pumpkin pie spice	
pinch of salt	
5 fortune tokens, each wrapped in parchment paper (silver coin, non-plastic button, wooden matchstick, metal thimble, gold ring)	

Preheat oven to 350F. Grease a 9-inch round cake pan; line with waxed paper. In a saucepan, heat raisins and sugar with tea, stirring, until sugar dissolves. Cool. Sift dry ingredients together; set aside. Add candied peel and grated rind to the raisin tea mixture. Stir in butter and eggs. Gradually add dry ingredients. Combine well. Pour into prepared pan and hide the parchment wrapped fortune tokens deep in the batter. Bake for 1 1/2 hours, or until a cake tester can be withdrawn dry. Makes 1 cake. (Classic Irish Recipes, Georgina Campbell)

The **Christmas Céilidh Band** is five outstanding Celtic musicians: Kevin Angus, Pat Carey, Ben Ford, Cathy McGrath and Paul Gluchowski. Together they create an exciting energy, unique sound and lively performance. CCB has been delighting holiday audiences with their varied program of traditional and contemporary Celtic music and song since 2001. Their instrumentation includes bagpipes, Irish flute, silver flute, whistles, guitar, banjo, mandolin, mandola, cittern, cello, fiddle, percussion and multi-voice harmonies. Find us on facebook [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063018291042](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063018291042)

### Christmas Céilidh Band Concert

Saturday, December 4 at 7:00 pm at The United Church, 11 Gibson St, Canandaigua NY  
Check for details at [www.facebook.com/unitedchurchcdga](http://www.facebook.com/unitedchurchcdga)

### Christmas Céilidh Band Concert at Golden Link Folk Singing Society

Saturday, December 11 at 7:30 pm at Rochester Christian Reformed Church, 2750 Atlantic Ave., Penfield, NY 14526 Presale tickets only. Details at [www.goldenlink.org](http://www.goldenlink.org)  
Proof of vaccination and masks required.

### Tunes By The Tracks Celtic Christmas Concert

#### Cuisle Mo Chroí

(Pat Carey, Cathy McGrath and Mary Lester)

Wednesday, December 15 at 7:00 at Clifton Springs Library, 4 Railroad Ave.,

Clifton Springs NY

Donation at the door. Please wear a mask.

[www.facebook.com/CuisleMoChroi3](http://www.facebook.com/CuisleMoChroi3)

Find Tunes By The Tracks on Facebook [www.facebook.com/groups/226130827536313](http://www.facebook.com/groups/226130827536313)



**Comhaltas-Sponsored Music Sessions**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month:**

**open**

4:00 pm **The American Hotel** 7304 E. Main Street, Lima, NY  
 No session September 5, due to Labor Day holiday

**Last Sunday of every month:**

**the bar is open but not the kitchen;  
 bring a snack to share**

**Johnny's Irish Pub**, 1382 Culver Road, Rochester, NY  
 3:00 pm Music Learning Session with Mark Ballard  
 5:00 pm Regular session

**OTHER TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC SESSIONS**

**Every Tuesday:**

7:00 pm (study session) **Charlotte Tavern**, 2 River Road & Lake Ave.  
 (open)

**Every Saturday:**

2:00-5:30 pm. **Barry's Old School Irish**, 2 W Main St. Webster.  
 Leaders: Ben Goehring & Sean Rosenberry  
 (open)

**Wednesdays at Intermissions** (Intermissions Bar and Grille) **BACK IN PERSON!**

8 Center St, Geneseo, NY 14454 7:00-10:00 PM

For a summary of all local sessions:

<http://irishrochester.weebly.com/sessions.html>

Comhaltas Rochester T-Shirts Only \$15.  
 To purchase a t-shirt, contact Kate Ballard at [katekballard@gmail.com](mailto:katekballard@gmail.com)



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**Branch Officers – 2020-2021**

Cathoirleach (Chair)  
Dave Halligan  
Leas-Cathoirleach (Vice Chair)  
Mark Ballard  
Runai (Secretary)  
Bill Hallahan  
Cisteoir (Treasurer)  
Lynn Pilaroscia  
Míchoir (Auditor)  
Peg Halligan  
Youth Officer  
Lydia Fanara  
Youth Protection Officer  
Gavin Barry  
Public Relations Officer  
Jess Kamens

**Programs**

Music Events  
Dave Halligan  
Kate Ballard  
Ceili Dancing  
Arlene Miller  
Membership  
Bill Hallahan  
Singers' Session  
Chris Brennan  
Music Learner's Session  
Mark Ballard  
Website & Facebook  
Ben Hockenberry  
Newsletter  
Bill Hallahan  
Music Instrument Library  
Mark Gowman

Look for us on Facebook:

**Rochester Irish Musician's Association****Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann  
MEMBERSHIP AND DUES for 2021**Dues:

First Adult	\$25.00
Second Adult	\$ 8.00
Family	\$40.00
Junior	\$ 4.00

Make check payable to: "CCE Rochester"

Mail to: Comhaltas  
6658 North Avon Road  
Honeoye Falls, NY 14472

**Your donations are welcome.****Irish Rochester CDs are still available.**

This classic, 2-CD set, produced by John McGraw contains many of the traditional tunes you will hear at sessions as well as local musicians from the Rochester area. **Only \$20.**

To purchase a CD, contact Dave Halligan:

[halligan33@gmail.com](mailto:halligan33@gmail.com)**Irish music on the internet:**<https://www.clare.fm/listen-back/the-west-wind/>

**JOIN COMHALTAS AND SUPPORT IRISH MUSIC, AND CULTURE.  
NEW MEMBERSHIP YEAR: NOVEMBER 1 (2021) TO OCTOBER  
31 (2022). YOU CAN STILL JOIN OR RENEW ANY TIME.**

If you have ideas or articles or announcements or photos to include in this newsletter, please send them to Bill Hallahan at [whallah3@naz.edu](mailto:whallah3@naz.edu).

