



## The Richmond Claddagh

<http://richmondias.org/>

### Newsletter of the Richmond Irish American Society

**February 2009**

#### IAS February Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> at Glen Allen Library:

This note from Dan Begley – “Sharing stories is an Irish tradition and I plan to get other IAS members who have told me yarns over the years to get together for the February meeting. I have talked with Mildred Kladde about coming - she did a half hour talk on her father with the Richmond AOH group. Jack Cassell has stories about Ireland. I have a story to share, with pictures that should take about 10 minutes. Carmel Miney has lots of stories that reflect the cultural changes in Ireland and Steve Gallagher will talk about taking his sons to Ireland this past summer to see family still living in Ireland. If any members have stories to share about your Irish heritage/family, your visits to Ireland or your Irish roots – where your family comes from? When did your family come to America? Etc.... please call Dan at 804-740-5631.

This Glen Allen Library is located at 10501 Staples Mill Rd. 804-756-7563. It's our first time having a meeting at this location, so if you have any questions on the location, please call Dan. You can also [click here for directions to the library](#)

#### Also on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> A Celtic Evening with St. Andrew's Legions Pipes and Drums and Friends.

The Legion sends a warm invitation to join them for a very special evening of Celtic Entertainment. Let the band and its guests take you to the Highlands of Scotland or to the Emerald Isle itself. This event is sponsored by the Amelia County High School Athletic Boosters. Check the back page calendar for more information

#### March 7<sup>th</sup> – IAS Pub Supper Poe's Pub

##### A Message From Pub Master Joan Finnegan -

Too many Irish events in February – so Please make plans to join us on **March 7<sup>th</sup>** at Poe's Pub located at **2706 EAST MAIN STREET** Gathering time is 6:00 pm – but get there when you can. There's great Pub Food and a Fun Atmosphere – and of course, the company of your IAS friends just can't be beat! If you are coming, please call Joan at **804-840-0080** or email her at [J.FINN@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:J.FINN@HOTMAIL.COM) Joan says she'll make sure that the tables are reserved so that we can all sit together. Click here for [Poe's Menu](#)

#### GET READY FOR THE ST. PAT'S FESTIVAL!!

Hey IAS members-it's time to get ready for the **FESTIVAL on CHURCH HILL!** This year our own, Denis Maguire has volunteered to help Joan Finnegan with the parade by trying to coordinate our IAS members who plan to march with the Society. (No, it's not like herding cats - we are a well-disciplined marching unit – OK so we have more fun than precision!) Please contact Denis at 804-739-0429 to volunteer to join our merry band of marchers for the Parade or email him at [maguired@comcast.net](mailto:maguired@comcast.net) and also please plan to wear either an Irish/Celtic costume or appropriate green attire to flaunt that Irish pride. You never know what legendary Irish heroes and plain folk will show up for the march. Hmmm???? The parade is a great way to kick off a great festival and it also gives us a chance to let area folks know about our Society! This is an event that always brings in new members - So please come on out – march with us and have fun and let visitors to the IAS tent get to meet our great members and learn about their Irish heritage and the IAS too! We'll be looking for volunteers for the IAS tent so check your schedules and call Karon Bell to sign up! (804-308-37090).

#### And a note from IAS member and our favorite storyteller, Kathy Mincz....

Where was the best place to be on January 20th? Washington, DC? At an Inaugural Ball? Nope! The best place was the Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen for the Celtic Crossroads concert. This group of 7 very talented musicians entertained a nearly sold out crowd. The list of different instruments goes on and on: Irish harp (2 of them!), bodhran, guitar, fiddle, Uilleann pipes, flutes, banjo, whistles, etc., etc. The music ranged from Traditional Irish to Gypsy songs, to jazz and to that bluegrass favorite, "Orange Blossom Special." All of these different types of music had that underlying feel of "Irishness." If it wasn't enough that these musicians all played a variety of instruments and had a wonderful singer to boot, they also had two outstanding step dancers to entertain us. At the end of the evening, they received a well-deserved standing ovation. If you ever get the opportunity to hear them, don't pass it up!

**SOS!!! MAYDAY!!! HELP!! WE NEED OUR MEMBERS INPUT AND IDEAS!!!**

Our monthly meetings are getting more difficult to set up in locations that are either free or very reasonably priced and are also centrally located for our members. We need to get some suggestions/help from our members. Do you belong to a neighborhood association that might have a Neighborhood Center that would be available for our meetings? Can you find out if we could use the facility and also ask about their rental fees? Do you know of a restaurant/business/whatever – that has a place where we could meet. (Think of the old “Celebrity Room” and the huge back room they had) Could you help the IAS find alternative places for our monthly meetings? Do you have time to call some facilities in the Richmond area to check on rental fees? Do you know if local shopping centers, schools, churches, lodges, etc., have facilities available to other non-profit organizations for meetings? Do you have any creative ideas on what or where the IAS could explore for new meeting sites? Please contact Dan Begley - [dbegley55@hotmail.com](mailto:dbegley55@hotmail.com) or 804-740-5631 and let him know if you can help out or let him know if you have some suggestions for new meeting places.

**The January Meeting** – What a good turnout we had at the Bon Air Library for the meeting featuring the video of JFK’s visit to Ireland in 1963. It was most touching to go back 45 years, hear the speeches, see Ireland “then” and enjoy a more innocent time – before things changed that awful November. An added bonus to the movie – it also included wonderful information on the history of Ireland. It was so nice to meet new members Pat & Allen Davis – who joined at the Highland Games in November. It was also good to see Dave & Mary Geary – long time members who made it to this meeting after a long absence. (We hope to see you all at lots more!) Others who attended were Gloria Cahen, Judy Garrett, Carmel Miney, Maureen and Colum Toibin, Kent Booty, Frank & Pam Hardy, Jim McGroarty, Colleen Callahan, Denis Maguire, Jim Bandeleian, Ed Kast, Doug Elder and daughter Rhane, Ann McGehee, Nancy Emig – if I forgot anyone. I apologize. This was such a great program – we are hoping to convince Dan to run it again in warmer weather and at a daytime location.

**What We Hope to Do with the Newsletter in ‘09:**

- Learn about and share the Irish heritage of our members -where their Irish family is from in Ireland, when the family came to America, and if known, how the family came to be in Virginia. Learn the family, regional, religious or other

traditions in our members lives that were directly related to your Irish heritage

- Seek other Irish organizations in or outside our immediate area, and exchange information about speakers, entertainment and information about Irish events.
- Look for interesting resources about Irish history, culture, Irish traditions, the history behind familiar Irish songs, and more to pass on to our members.

I need your help with some of these goals. This IAS newsletter is yours – I just look for things that I find educational, interesting or funny. Submissions from our members are not only very welcome, but they are enthusiastically encouraged. Irish Book reviews, Your Irish recipes, Your Irish jokes, Your commentary on a trip to Ireland or a favorite place in Ireland, ideas for the IAS Board or questions for the Board. Your impressions on your first trip to Ireland, or the reason you want to visit Ireland – both are interesting and full of personal emotion. You, the members are the fabric and the future of our Society. – If there is something **you like** about the IAS – let us know. Also if there is something you **don’t like**... let us know that too. We need you and your feedback to sustain and continually improve the Society. Help us help to get you the best results from your membership. You can call me with questions, ideas, suggestions -anything at 804-323-6415, or email me at [bearfan46@verizon.net](mailto:bearfan46@verizon.net)

Also many thanks are offered to IAS members Kathy Mincz and Jim Bandeleian for their contributions in this issue. It was great to hear about the Celtic Crossroad concert from Kathy and also nice to read another perspective on the elusive meaning of “Irish” from Jim’s article.

**Irish Advertising:**

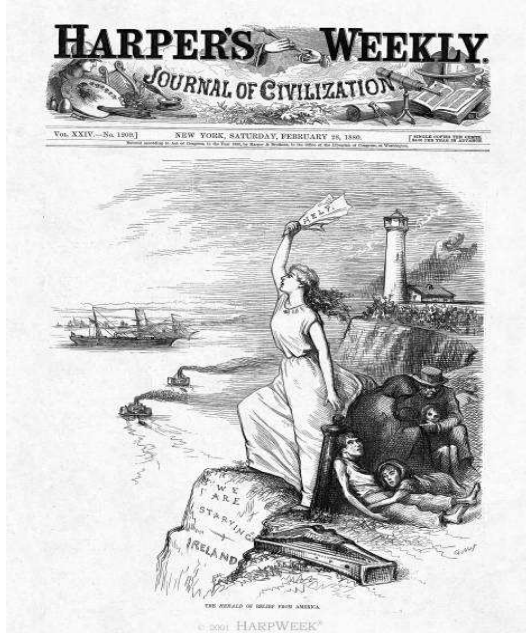


- On a plumber’s truck: “Don’t sleep with a drip. Call your plumber.”
- In a restaurant window: “Don’t stand there and be hungry. Come in and get fed up.”
- On a fence: “Salesmen welcome—dog food is expensive!”

**Filed Under Things That We NEVER Needed to Know!!**

**Gulp and Croak:** In 1975 John McNamara, Scariff, Co. Clare won the first Frog-Swallowing Championship of Ireland at Ballycomber, Co. Offaly. How did he win you ask? By swallowing five live frogs in 1 minute 5 seconds.

On **February 28, 1880**, *Harper's Weekly* featured this illustration about famine relief for Ireland.



**"The Herald of Relief from America"**

This *Harper's Weekly* drawing by Thomas Nast depicts American relief arriving for those suffering from the Irish famine of 1879-1880.

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, Ireland's population doubled to 8,000,000, as the potato became the colony's staple crop. Between 1845 and 1852, a devastating potato blight and the resultant famine in Ireland were responsible for the deaths of 1,000,000 and the emigration of 1,500,000 to the United States, Canada, and other areas of the British Empire; in all, over a quarter of the population was directly affected by the potato famine.

There were subsequent food shortages and famines over the years, but the potato famine in 1879-1880 was especially severe. Blight caused failure of most of the potato crop, cheap prices on American corn drove down the market price of the limited harvestable potatoes, and evictions of tenant farmers (as in other famine years) were common. Until the turn of the century, the vast majority of Irish farm land (97% in 1870) was owned by men who rented the land to tenant farmers, not by those who cultivated the land themselves. Land ownership was also concentrated in the hands of a few; in 1870, only 750 families owned 50% of the land in Ireland.

In 1879, Michael Davitt, a Fenian (militant Irish nationalist), formed the Irish National Land League, with Charles Stewart Parnell, a member of Parliament and a constitutional nationalist, as its president. The Land League organized agitation throughout Ireland

for an end to evictions and a radical change in the land system to allow tenants to become landowners. To enforce uniform compliance with their goals, the Land League convinced people to shun those tenants, land agents, and landlords who failed to cooperate. This tactic was first used against Charles Boycott, a land agent, and became known as "boycotting." Mounting tensions culminated in the Land War of 1879-1882. The election in 1880 of William Gladstone as prime minister ushered in a change in Britain's Irish policy. In 1881, Parliament enacted the Land Act, which guaranteed fair rents and made it possible for tenants to buy the land they farmed.

American newspapers gave significant coverage to the Irish Famine of 1879-1880. James Redpath, a journalist for the *New York Tribune*, contributed vivid, moving reports of the misery in Ireland, urging Americans to contribute to Irish relief funds. The Irish Famine was a major story in *Harper's Weekly* in the early months of 1880, with lengthy illustrated articles explaining the history and circumstances of landownership and famine in Ireland. The journal expressed confidence in American generosity: "America is not slow to respond to a call for bread." The primary coordinator in the United States for famine relief was the *New York Herald*, celebrated in this cartoon as "The Herald of Relief from America." The newspaper collected over \$200,000 by late February 1880. On March 27, 1880, the U.S. Department of Navy dispatched the *U.S.S. Constellation* to Ireland with over 3300 barrel of foodstuffs, plus articles of clothing.

In this political cartoon, the feminine symbol of Ireland (foreground) and the Irish people (background) wave white handkerchiefs of distress, signaling American ships transporting the *Herald's* relief collection to Eire's rocky shore. In the right-foreground, an emaciated Irish family huddles together, as the emblematic Irish Harp has toppled over to the ground and is covered with a banner "We are starving Ireland". In the right-background, the spirit of death hovers in the sky over the Irish people. Please Note - If you are reading this on line – you can click on the picture for a large image. (Article by Robert C. Kennedy)

**From Dan Begley** – Dear Members - I'm trying to gauge if there's any interest among our members in learning the Tin Whistle. If you are interested or if you know how to play and would like to share your knowledge - Give me a call at 804-740-5631

## **A Saint Patrick's Day Reflection: "What Does it Mean to be "Irish"?" By: Kyle Betit**

When your specialty is Irish genealogy, you are often confronted with the question of, "How do you define Irish?" This question especially hits me around Saint Patrick's Day, as it did last week, when I see a myriad of people wearing green, posting pictures of leprechauns and shamrocks, drinking green beer, and the like. Is this what it means to be Irish? The people I know in Ireland look at this with puzzlement and wonder where it all came from. It is a peculiarly American phenomenon. Such a popular mythology of what it means to be Irish can unfortunately marginalize elements of the Irish population and of Irish history and genealogy. Even if people get past the green beer and corned beef and cabbage, they often seem to assume a set definition of who the Irish are which can be a narrow picture.

Before I started researching Irish genealogy I sometimes couldn't remember whether there were more Protestants in the North or the South of Ireland, so I am no stranger to being uninformed about Ireland. But I've learned a lot since then about the complexity of Irish culture, history, and people. In this column, I would like to share some of my own observations and experiences about this. I don't claim to have all the answers, and I'm not an Irish historian, but I hope that the following might be thought provoking for those reading this column in terms of what it means to be Irish.

This year I noticed a Saint Patrick's Day parade lined with flags displaying Celtic crosses and the word Eire. Now, I greatly admire Celtic crosses. However, these flags reminded me that, in my experience, I have found that many people have the perception that "Irish" means both Gaelic and Catholic, thus eliminating anyone who doesn't fit into those categories. On the other hand, when I visit Irish festivals and genealogy gatherings around the United States and Canada, I notice that about half of the people have ancestors from Ireland who were Protestants rather than Catholics. I also find that many Irish Catholics and their children left the church when they went to North America or Australia; were they no longer Irish?

There were many thousands of Presbyterians from the lowlands of Scotland who settled in Ulster (the northern province of Ireland) in the 1600s, and their descendants came in great numbers to America starting in the 1700s. There were the "Old English" (Norman Irish who often remained Catholics after the Reformation) and the "New English" (Protestants who came to Ireland after the Reformation). People of Irish Catholic descent might be surprised to find how much

of their ancestry goes back to the "Old English" and (probably to a lesser extent) the "New English." The former, in particular, widely intermarried with the local Gaels.

Some of my own Irish ancestors were "New English" Protestants who came to Ireland at the time of Cromwell in the 1600s. A Bible from this Irish family, kept by the generation that came from Queens County (now Laois County), Ireland, to Canada, is now one of my treasured possessions. Others of my Irish ancestors were Roman Catholics from County Down; it is from these forebears that I have inherited my own Roman Catholic religion. So I can see the mix of cultures in Ireland from a very personal perspective.

Irish families of English origin were often called Anglo-Irish, and some of the Anglo-Irish produced literature and poetry that are known and loved the world over. Examples include the works of Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and W. B. Yeats. The more prominent Anglo-Irish comprised the Protestant Ascendancy that ruled Ireland for several centuries. It was actually Irish Presbyterians with their Catholic countrymen who were instrumental in the United Irish movement of the 1790s, and Protestants were prominent in the Home Rule movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of the first American presidents were of Scots-Irish heritage. Canada had important early leaders of both Catholic and Protestant Irish background. Did you know that it was the Irish who brought Methodism to America in the 1780s?

We should not use religion as a guideline to what "Irish" means, because religion is so intermixed among families in Ireland. There were Irish Quakers, Irish Baptists, Irish Methodists, Irish Jews, Irish Congregationalists, and others. Did you know that two of the presidents of the Republic of Ireland in this century were Protestants? From my experience as a family historian, mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants were more common than we realize. For example, you will find numerous Roman Catholic Campbells in the North of Ireland whose ancestors were originally Presbyterians from Scotland. When you look at the Irish Diaspora, you see an even more diverse picture of religious affiliation.

The term Eire is sometimes used to refer to what is now the Republic of Ireland (the larger part of the island of Ireland). Unfortunately, it was often used pejoratively in twentieth century England to refer to the Irish Republic. But originally, it referred to the whole island. As we know, the island of Ireland is now politically divided. In 1921 twenty-six counties



separated from Great Britain to form the Irish Free State, which eventually became the Republic of Ireland. The six other counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone) remained in the United Kingdom with Great Britain. Many people in Northern Ireland certainly consider themselves Irish, but they are also British subjects, and many of the Protestants and even some of the Catholics among them want to remain Irish and British. I would not say that Eire is not a term with which Northern Irish Protestants identify.

At one Irish festival some years ago, I displayed at my genealogy booth both the modern Irish Republic's tricolor flag (which our Irish ancestors wouldn't recognize) as well as the Union Jack (the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland since 1801). I did this because the Union Jack is not only the official flag of the people of Northern Ireland, but also the flag under which all of our Irish ancestors lived in the period 1801-1921. However, due to some disturbing protests at the festival, I decided to take down the Union Jack. I hadn't intended to offend anyone; I had only intended to be historically accurate and reflective of the present reality of Ireland.

I have often had someone come up to me at an Irish festival and say, "My ancestors were from Ireland" and then in hushed tones add, "but they were Protestant." I would urge people not to avoid learning about their Protestant Irish heritage and genealogy. What's more, you may find you are descended from some Catholics too. Conversions happened, in both directions.

Often, Americans also think that to be Irish has always meant to be anti-British and a supporter of a united Ireland independent from Britain. Well, did you know that the first recorded Saint Patrick's Day parade was held in colonial New York City by Irish soldiers in the British Army? People of English descent have been present in Ireland since the twelfth century. Has their presence been all good or all bad? I think the answer is much grayer than black and white. It seems to me that their legacy includes the building of many of the cities and towns of Ireland, a centralized government, and the use of the English language (now an international standard). However, their legacy includes the unjust Penal Laws against Catholics especially in the 1700s and the wresting of lands away from the old Gaelic leaders in the 1600s to put in the hands of Protestant "planters" in Ulster, Cromwellian adventurers, and Protestant followers of King William. But even the story of the Penal Laws themselves points out how much more complicated the Irish situation was than it's generally made out to be. Many of the Penal Laws were largely ignored, and many

Irish Protestants helped their Catholic friends and relations to circumvent them. Likewise, when there was briefly a Catholic King in England Ireland, King James II in the 1680s, many Irish Catholics helped their Protestant neighbors and relatives. One book I have been reading which I highly recommend to explain some of the complexity of the situation is Richard Chenevix Trench's *Grace's Card: Irish Catholic Landlords 1690-1800* (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1997).

Does it matter how we view "who is Irish and who is not?" I think it does. The exclusion of certain people from "Irishness" is partly at the root of the political tensions and violence that have plagued Ireland in recent decades. It would be naive in my opinion for us North Americans to think we understand the complexity of the situation in Northern Ireland, but it seems a good start to seek to understand and respect all of Ireland's people and traditions, whether they are Protestant or Catholic, nationalist or unionist, Gaelic or Anglo-Irish or Scots-Irish.

In my view "Irish" means simply "from the island of Ireland." And I would urge all to respect the very complex history of Ireland and the many cultural experiences and political viewpoints of the Irish people. Having a more open-minded view of the varied and complex Irish experience might also help us avoid overlooking important possibilities and unexpected clues in our family history research.

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(Found on the Forum pages on LiveIreland.com and Submitted by IAS member Jim Bandeleian)

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**Happy Valentine's Day  
To all our IAS members**



**May Love be in Your Hearts!**

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

<http://richmondias.org/events.php> or for a full month calendar of current events click here. [IAS Calendar](#)

<p><b>Monday, Feb 9th</b> -8 pm The Dublin Philharmonic Orchestra.</p>	<p>Celtic Program, Tickets on Sale NOW! <b>\$33.50 - \$36.50 - \$39.50 - \$44.50 Paramount Theater</b>, 215 East Main Street, Charlottesville, Virginia 22902 Box Office: 434.979.1333   Administrative Office: 434.979.1922   <a href="mailto:info@theparamount.net">Email: info@theparamount.net</a></p>
<p><b>February 15<sup>th</sup></b> <b>IAS Board Meeting 7pm</b></p>	<p>Monthly Board Meeting. All IAS members are welcome. Please call President, Gloria Cahen for directions.804-233-2113</p>
<p><b>February 19th</b> <b>IAS Meeting</b> <b>Glen Allen Library</b> <b>10501 Staples Mill Rd. 804-756-7563</b></p> <p><b>“Seanachie Night”</b></p>	<p>Come join in the Rich history of the Irish Seanachie – the ancient storytellers of Ireland. The difference is tonight – you’ll be the Seanachie. Bring your stories of Ireland, Irish Customs, Irish memories, Irish jokes, Irish limericks, growing up in Ireland, growing up in America in your Irish family.</p> <p>It’s a rich and varied culture that we Irish have – come and share your history with us and enjoy as other members share theirs too.</p> <p>Meeting starts at 7 – come at 6:30 to socialize and meet other Irish!</p>
<p><b>February 19<sup>th</sup> - 8PM</b> Internationally acclaimed poet Irish Vona Groarke will read at the University of Richmond. The event is in Weinstein Hall's Brown-Alley Room. This event is free and open to the public.</p>	<p>Native to the Irish midlands, Groarke has published four collections of poetry. Among her works are "Shale" and "Other People's Houses," winning her such prestigious awards as the Hennessy Award for Poetry, the Brendan Behan Memorial Prize and Strokestown International Poetry Award. Her third book, "Flight," was short-listed for the Forward Prize and received the 2003 Michael Hartnett Award. Groarke is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and is celebrated for her reflections on family and place, in addition to the song-like quality she creates with language. She divides her time teaching in the English department at Wake Forest University and the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester. For more information, call (804) 289-8287.</p>
<p><b>February 21<sup>st</sup> - 7 PM</b> St. Andrews in Amelia Amelia County High School Auditorium (<a href="#">directions</a>) \$10</p>	<p>Join St. Andrew’s Legion Pipes and Drums for a very special evening of Celtic Entertainment. Let the band and its guests take you to the Highlands of Scotland or to the Emerald Isle itself. Tickets can be purchased in advance at <a href="http://www.salpd.com/store.php">www.salpd.com/store.php</a> For more information please contact Doug Elder at <a href="mailto:secretary@salpd.com">secretary@salpd.com</a> or Tim Batten at <a href="mailto:pipemajor@salpd.com">pipemajor@salpd.com</a> Appearing - <a href="#">St. Andrew’s Legion Pipes and Drums</a> The Washington DC St. Andrew’s Colour Guard, <a href="#">Nelson Academy Irish Dancers</a> Amelia County High School Air Force Cadets, <a href="#">Mary Smith- Celtic singer</a> Sue Tarr-</p>
<p><b>February 28th</b> <a href="#">Richmond Folk Music</a> In Concert – Southern Horizon (<b>featuring IAS member – John Robison.</b>) Tickets \$12.00 advance/\$15.00 at door Doors Open 7:15 pm Concert – 8:00 pm Congregation Or Ami, 9400 West Huguenot Road, Richmond, Virginia 23235</p>	<p>Widely considered to be one of the finest groups on the East Coast specializing in authentic music of the 19th Century, with special emphasis on the Civil War era, Richmond based Southern Horizon has firmly established its reputation over more than twenty years of performing at concert venues, reenactments, museum, schools, and period dances. The band performs in costume, using instruments and arrangements similar to what would have been found in the mid 1800's. But these songs and tunes are not treated like museum relics! Each piece is arranged and performed with spirit and verve. The music is drawn on the traditions of the people who played it: Scottish, Irish and English influences combine with the turbulence, joy and sadness of this period in American history. Southern Horizon features <b>IAS Member and Southern Horizon Founding Member - John Robison</b> on Vocals, banjo, guitar, autoharp, pennywhistle and harmonica. John's musical career began in the folk boom of the 1960's in the coffeehouses in and around Washington, D.C. He is experienced as a solo performer and with folk, country and bluegrass groups. John also performs with the Irish music duo Turf Fire. <b>C’mon out and support our fellow IAS member – Let’s have a good turnout!</b></p>