



Ancient Order of
HIBERNIANS
Irish • Catholic • American



GENERAL MEAGHER'S DISPATCHES

October 2018

Volume 6/No. 10

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President's Corner:

Brothers:

Fall is *finally* here! But with the nice cool weather comes hurricane season. Please pray for the victims of Hurricanes Michael and Florence. The pictures of the devastation are heartbreaking. Also remember the rescue workers sacrificing their time.

We will be visiting John Tracy at his home on October 28th. Please mark your calendars and make every effort to join us; John really appreciates the company!

Our second annual memorial mass will be held on November 6. 7:30pm at St. Mary's. I appeal to each of you to please attend this solemn event. This is an opportunity to come together as a fraternal organization and pray for our departed Hibernian brethren.

Be on the lookout for information regarding our annual Christmas party. We may be trying something different again this year by including one of the local charities which focuses on children and families. My hope is that we will be able to spread some Christmas cheer beyond our organization!

As always, please remember those on the prayer list and pray for me and one another. We are going through some tough times as a faith community but it is through faith that we will heal and persevere!

In Our Motto,

Shawn Lenahan



AOH National Life Membership: Brother Hugh O'Brien



VAAOH State President Bill Halpin had the honor of presenting National AOH Life Membership to our Brother Hugh O'Brien. Hugh has a distinguished career in the AOH beginning when he joined the General Meagher Division. He served the division as president for three terms (1995-97) and in appointed division positions including Chairman Standing Committee (2010-13), Historian (2008-2016), Charities Committee chairman (2010-present), as St Jude Parish Liaison (2009-present) and the Past Presidents Committee (2014-present). Having excelled at the division, Hugh was elected Virginia State Secretary in 1997, State VP in 1999, and State President in 2001. After that Hugh accepted appointments as the Buy Irish Chairman (2004-2012) and Political Education Chairman (2012-present).

Brother O'Brien is an inspiration within our division and throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. His steadfast support and dedication to all Ancient Order of Hibernians' activities is the model for every Hibernian to follow. His record setting attendance at division meetings is unsurpassed as are his contributions to the good and welfare of the Order. Brother O'Brien seems to be omnipresent when the Meagher Division needs volunteers for any external or internal activities. He is a presence in Hibernian parades in Fredericksburg, Alexandria and elsewhere and at 30 consecutive annual Gaelic Masses. Even on the coldest, blustery days in December or January, Brother O'Brien is always present and often presents the boxwood wreath commemorating the Irish Brigade's heroic actions in the Battle of Fredericksburg. He demonstrates his Catholic faith each January in Fredericksburg Freedom of Religion March. Also significant, Hugh has attended nearly every national convention from 1997 thru the Louisville convention in 2018.





“The Celt would forfeit his title to the respect of the civilized world, did he not fight with all his heart and all his soul and all his cunning against the empire which has despoiled him and murdered his kin, now with arms, now with artificial famine. There can be no peace between the two people until either Ireland is a desert or is free. It is war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt. There can be neither truce nor compromise.”

Those words accurately describe the Irish attitude beginning in 1155. During nearly 800 years of English occupation, the Irish were systemically denied every human right. Strictly enforced laws criminalized speaking Irish, practicing the Catholic faith, and offered rewards for the capture of Catholic priests (dead or alive). To complete Irish disenfranchisement, in 1650 the English confiscated Irish owned property and transferred ownership to loyalists, most of whom were “transplanted” from England and Scotland to Ireland.

In 1703 the English parliament passed the “***Act for the Better Securing of the Government against Papists***”, creating *de facto* a ruling class in Ireland known as the "Protestant Ascendancy". This Act -- known more commonly as the Penal Laws -- included 20 or more edicts. Here are a few of the most egregious:

- Banned Catholics from public offices
- Barred Catholics from voting
- Banned Catholics from buying land
- Banned education for Catholics.
- Banned Catholics from teaching even in private houses, subject to a £20 fine and three months in prison for each offence.
- Catholic inheritances of land were equally subdivided between all of the owner's sons. However, if the eldest son converted to Protestantism he would become the sole owner
- Loyalists were paid rewards for alerting authorities to observed offences within the Catholic population

The result -- well into the last half of the 19th century, illiteracy, poverty and malnutrition prevailed among Irish Catholics. About one half of Ireland was owned by 750 loyalist families. The Irish rented small plots (< ½ acre) from their landlords to grow food (primary potatoes) for their families. These tenant farmers paid the rent by laboring in the landlord’s fields; the fruits of their labor were shipped often under armed guard to England.

In the 1840s and at the height of ***An Gorta Mor***, the Assistant Secretary of the English Treasury was Sir Charles Trevelyan. Trevelyan was in charge of administrating relief for suffering Irish peasants. During “Black 47”, Trevelyan deliberately dragged his feet in disbursing food and monetary aid as

the Irish were dying by the tens of thousands. His most enduring mark on history is his disdain for the Irish shown by frequently repeated genocidal, anti-Irish racial statements. These samples are quotes from his letters to his boss, Lord Monteagle of Brandon, Chancellor of the Exchequer:

“An Irishman will soon be as rare a sight in Connemara as a Red Indian on the shores of Manhattan”

"The real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the (Irish) people".

The famine is an *"effective mechanism for reducing surplus (Irish) population"*.

During this same timeframe, to meet an English demand for more butter, beef, mutton and other “pasture” products English landlords began converting farm land to grazing land. As acreage used to produce grains decreased, the need for Irish labor likewise decreased. Without work the Irish had no way to pay their rents and this led to evictions.¹

As late as 1920, in a letter to Pope Benedict XV future Irish President Seán O’Kelly wrote:

“The position of Irish Catholics is a cruel one. We are enslaved by a Protestant power. The penal laws against our religion are not yet abolished in full. The injurious social and economic results of these anti-Catholic laws will not be overcome for generations. To the present day we suffer political injury inside and outside of Ireland, simply and solely because we are practicing Catholics.”

To suggest the Irish who lived under system of savage repression set themselves up for failure because they didn’t apply proper farming practices, or that they relied too heavily on potatoes for sustenance, as explanations for the origins and extent of *An Gorta Mor* shows superficiality beyond comprehension.



If the British re-partitioned Ireland, this is what it would look like

IRISH CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING; Distributed to U.S. Congress by Irish National Caucus//MichaelBearra@IrishCentral September 20, 2018 (**edited for *Dispatches***)

The last 40 years have shown the Unionist majority in the north of Ireland is fading. Figures from 2016 show 44 percent of working-age adults are Catholic while 40 percent are Protestant. Among the over 60 demographic 57 percent are Protestant and 35 percent are Catholic. However, among

¹ Turner, M. *After the Famine: Irish Agriculture, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

schoolchildren, Catholics are at 51 percent compared to 37 percent Protestant.



A new Irish/UK border?

By 2021, the anniversary of the founding of the northern state, there will likely be a Catholic majority which will only increase in the years following. The Good Friday Agreement called for a border poll and there may be one as early as 2022. Catholics of voting age will hold a demographic advantage. Unionists are hoping that many Catholics, especially in the middle class, will vote to stay in the union. Others predict that a nationalist majority will vote for a united Ireland, pointing to the fact that the vote in Northern Ireland elections still splits strictly along religious lines. Hardline unionists, including the DUP leader Arlene Foster, say they'll not live in a united Ireland.

The issue is front and center again because of Brexit and the uncertain future of Northern Ireland. Looking at how a repartitioned Ireland appears on a map, it is clear the unionist numbers predominate in the eastern part of the state while nationalists are far more prominent in the western part. Unionism would be lost every place west of the Bann River, except Coleraine a town of about 1400 people in Derry. But, there is one huge problem -- West Belfast, a Catholic enclave deep in unionist territory, would be surrounded and require something like West Berlin status.



About Halloween -- How it started in Ireland

In Ireland, Halloween is also known as *Samhain*, All Hallows Eve, Hallowmas and Hallowtide. It is celebrated on 31 October but the holiday of Halloween is not just celebrated on the one day any more as the Christian holidays of All Saints Day, 1 November and All Souls Day, 2 November are celebrated as well.

The Celtic Year – *Samhain*

Long before [Christianity arrived in Ireland](#) Halloween was known as Samhain, this is because the Celtic year was divided into two: the Brighthalf which is called Beltane and the Darkhalf which is called Samhain.

Beltane, or in Irish *Bealtaine*, begins at moonrise on 30th April, which is metaphysically understood to be the moment when the Earth's generative and reproductive energies are at their peak. Pagan rituals were held on this day to enhance and increase the fertility of the land, people and the animals. Feasts were held to welcome the newly awakened Earth. Of course in Ireland this is the day that the Faeries and Leprechauns are out in force. Today in some parts of rural Ireland these rituals are still carried out on Beltane but these traditional rituals are seen less and less as May Day is more widely celebrated.

Samhain translates to, "summers end" and *Samhain* marks the end of the Brighthalf and the beginning of the Darkhalf. The Ancient Celtic New Year starts at nightfall on 31 October and according to Irish tradition the barrows and mounds where the Sidhe (Fairies) dwell can open and they along with the dead can walk the Earth.

Where did Trick or Treat come from?

Many changes have taken place since the celebrations of *Samhain* and the introduction of Christianity played a huge part in that in Ireland.

The custom of 'trick or treat' was founded in Ireland when children and the poor went from door to door at Halloween and sang songs or offered prayers for the soul of the dead in return for food usually a soul cake which was a flattened bread that contained fruit, this tradition was known as 'Souling'.

Why do people wear costumes on Halloween?

The custom of dressing up in costume comes from an old Celtic tradition when people dressed in costumes that resembled evil spirits in order to placate them. At Halloween when the veil between the living and the dead is at its thinnest, men would have dressed in white

and blackened their faces to resemble the dead to acknowledge them and so appease them that they might not visit the homes of the living or if you were to meet a spirit on your travels they would accept you as one of their own and not be tempted to carry you away in the morning.

Where did Jack-O-Lantern come from?

The Jack-O-Lantern today is usually carved out of a Pumpkin; but in days long ago the Irish would have used a turnip or swede as these would have been widely available and this tradition was taken to America along with the Irish immigrants.

The origin of carving Jack-O-Lanterns is unclear but an old Irish folk tale tells of Stingy Jack a lazy Irish Blacksmith who tricks the Devil and traps him using a cross and refuses to free him until the Devil agrees not to take his soul when he dies.

Many years later Jack dies and because he was lazy and no good during his life he is refused entry to Heaven so he turns to the Devil who will not back down on his promise and refuses to take his soul distraught Jack cries out that he has no light to see his way through the darkness of eternity and laughing the Devil throws him a flame that has come directly from Hell and will never extinguish so Jack is forced to carve a lantern out of a turnip that he may find his way as he wanders the Earth for all Eternity, he became known as Jack of the Lantern or Jack-O-Lantern.

How is Halloween Celebrated in Ireland Today?

Today Halloween is a holiday devoted to fun and pranks, feasting and dressing up and of course trick or treating.

It is not unusual to see houses in Ireland decked out in all manner of decorations from

ghosts and witches to Vampires and Banshees.

A growing trend here in Ireland is to have a Halloween tree, not unlike a Christmas tree but it is black and has all types of Halloween creepy crawlies attached to it.

Children will run from door to door, dressed in colorful costumes from evil witches to nasty little hobgoblins all shouting, “trick or treat” and they will receive sweets, fruit or nuts so ensuring that the house will be safe from any tricks the children wish to play.



Our DIVISION Prayers



Jack Grey, Committee of the Sick Chairman. Prayer requests should be sent to Jack not later than the Wednesday prior to the business meeting (RHGrey@cox.net//540-373-4496).

Pray for the repose of the souls of all deceased Hibernian Brothers.

Keep in your prayers our family members and friends:

- **Nolan Banks**, 3 year old son of our former FS Jeff Banks. Nolan has soft tissue sarcoma (RMS). Essentially, Nolan needs a miracle. **Pray for the intercession of Father Augustus Tolton**, a candidate for future canonization (for the actual prayer visit: <http://www.toltoncanonization.org/prayer/canonizationprayer.html>)
- **John Tracy**, confined to home with COPD
- **Pat Phillips**, wife of Brother Bill Phillips, recovering from surgery
- **Michael D. McLaughlin**, Dave McLaughlin’s brother hospitalized with multiple health issues
- **Donna Maffeo**, Joe Monaghan’s sister-in-law, and his father Joseph Sr. care giver for his mother and uncle (dementia/Alzheimer);
- **John O’Brien** Hugh O’Brien’s brother (recovering from stroke);
- **Patricia Stephen**, mother of Rusty O’Brien’s friend Ann-Marie Sharratt, diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia
- **Amy Whittaker** (cancer)



Upcoming Events



Mark Your Calendars!

Bingo! Every Thursday and Saturday evening 6:30PM at St Michael the Archangel High School, 6301 Campus Drive, Fredericksburg. Bring the family!

Date is TBD for the FFAI field trip to the Guinness Brewery and Irish Railroad Museum in Baltimore

16 October: Division meeting

28 October: Visit John Tracy

November 3: Fourth Quarter State Meeting, hosted by John Cardinal O'Connor Division, Williamsburg at St Bede Catholic Church. Major Degrees opportunity

November 6: Division Mass of Remembrance, 7:30 PM at St Mary

December TBD: Division Christmas Party



General Meagher Division Attire

In a perfect world every brother would have these articles of clothing:

- For **semi-formal/formal occasions**, the AOH “uniform” is green sport coat, tri-color sash, white shirt, Irish theme tie, black trousers and optional ball cap. These occasions include AOH State and National conventions, Masses, funerals, AOH dinners, parades, and other public events.
- At **informal events** (i.e. Division outings (ball games, picnics, meetings, etc.) the division logo polo or sweatshirts (optional ball cap) are appropriate.

Division Logo Items: **The Point of Contact for Division logo polo shirts, sweatshirts and ball caps is Shawn Lenahan (s_lenahan@verizon.net)**

Green Jacket: Brothers procure their own green jackets. One source: http://blazerdepot.com/pages/mens_blazer/augustagreenblazer.html. Visit the website; call the 800 number; tell them you're with AOH and the \$5.00 small order fee can be waived. Kelly green is the color.

AOH Sash: Brothers procure their own sashes. The AOH tri-color sash represents the national colors of Ireland and should be worn over the right shoulder (green closest to neck/collar) crossing to the left hip. Measure from right shoulder to left hip in inches; keep in mind the sash will normally be worn over a jacket, possibly a raincoat/overcoat (and maybe a growing waist line). Tri-color AOH sashes are available from:

- LAOH Sister Patricia Ankrom. Email Patricia at traceysbydesign@aol.com. She produces 7.5ft long sashes costing \$ 40.00 and guarantees satisfaction: if you're not satisfied send it back for a full refund.
- Gettysburg Flag offers tri-color sashes and offers “special prices” for larger orders. <https://www.gettysburgflag.com/custom/irish-parade-sash>

This newsletter is an unofficial publication providing information to members of the Gen Thomas F Meagher Division and others who may have interest in division activities. It is published by Bill Halpin and unless shown otherwise, he is the author of the contents.