

IN FRIENDSHIP, UNITY AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY



GENERAL MEAGHER'S DISPATCHES

www.aohvirginia.org/FredericksburgDiv1

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President: Jim O'Donnell **Chaplain:** Father Kevin Fimian **Vice President:** Bob Stevens
Financial Secretary: Bill Gilhooly **Treasurer:** Dick Dowd **Recording Secretary:** Kevin Doyle
Standing Committee: Jim McMorro **Marshal:** Neil Mulcahy **Sentinel:** Rusty O'Brien
Organizer and Newsletter Editor: Bill Halpin

SPECIAL NOTICE: The **Annual Gaelic Mass** will be celebrated *in Gaelic* on **March 9th (7:30PM)** at **Holy Family Church**, 14160 Ferndale Road, Woodbridge with reception to follow in Griffin Hall. Only about 25 miles north of Fredericksburg (much closer than Arlington!) take the Dale Blvd exit off I-95; to right turn on Forestdale Avenue, to left turn onto Ferndale Road, and *voila!* General Meagher Division is routinely well represented at this Mass.

Take Special Note of "Upcoming Events" for the Irish-American Heritage Month!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

February is a very crucial month for our Division. Most of all it is the beginning of the Lenten season, which prepares us for the Resurrection of Lord. It also is the last chance we have to prepare for what is probably our most important month—the month of March where we celebrate the feast day of our patron, St. Patrick and we outline the various events which highlight Irish Heritage month and what it means to be a Hibernian.

With this in mind your leadership team has decided to conduct our monthly February meeting on a Saturday, February 21. We felt that holding the regularly scheduled meeting would be too risky with the inclement weather. The last thing we want is to have someone injured going to or coming home from a meeting. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate and we will have a fruitful meeting please note the time of 11:00 am.

I want to thank you for the many notes of kindness that you have sent me. Your words of encouragement mean a lot to me and make me grow even more cognizant of the goodness of my Meagher Division brothers. I hope that I remain worthy of the trust you have given me as your president. Stay safe and warm during the frigid weather. May St. Patrick hold you close to his heart.

In our Motto, Jim O'D

VIRGINIA STATE SAINT COLUMCILLE AWARD TO JEFF FITZPATRICK

Jeff has represented the General Meagher Division for 12 years and the Ancient Order of Hibernians for 20 years. He served with distinction in two elected positions as Financial Secretary and as Vice President and in numerous appointed positions. In each of these important positions he added significant value to the division's recruitment efforts, organization, and operating processes. He was a chairman of the Charities Committee and Rose of Tralee Committee, and was a member of the division Shamrock Degree team. As St Mary Parish liaison (2008-2013), Jeff is responsible for the significant growth of division membership from St Mary Parish. He organizes the annual St Patrick dinner at Holy Cross Academy and the occasional Irish Breakfasts in the St Mary Parish Life Center. He managed AOH's successful relationships with the St Mary Council of Catholic Women, the Knights of Columbus, the Hispanic Ministry and the Holy Cross Academy Parent Teachers Organization. His advocacy assured a venue for recruiting, fund raising activities, and division identification as a member of the St Mary ministries. He championed Gen. Meagher Division support for Mary's Shelter and the Paul-Stefan Foundation. Jeff sponsored division support for the annual Storck Golf Tournament, the proceeds of which support maintenance of Holy Cross Academy's playing fields. Through Jeff's initiative, diligence, organizational skills, Fredericksburg enjoys an annual St Patrick Day Parade, the post-parade Irish Festival, and Theology of Tap at the Blue and Gray Brewery/Lee's Retreat Pub (NB: This is not an annual award; it represents dedicated support to AOH over an extended period.)



Representing the Virginia State Board, State Secretary Bill Halpin, presents the VAAOH Saint Columcille Award and Bob Stevens representing the General Meagher Division presents a similar division-level award for Sustained Superior Performance.



2014 DIVISION HIBERNIAN OF THE YEAR: JOHN HOGAN

Rain or shine, and in bitter December cold, John Hogan is a workhorse for the Division. He served as Sentinel for four years and was a member of the division Shamrock Degree Team. He spends long hours after Masses supporting division recruiting and fund raising activities. John volunteered to chair the division Project St Patrick committee. As a former seminarian, he recognizes the dwindling pool of men and women who follow religious vocations is a great danger to our Church. He coordinated with our four pastors who select students to attend the *Quo Vadis* and *Fiat* programs at Mount St Mary Seminary and proposed division funding to support attendance of four students. He also coordinates with National AOH to ensure availability of Project St Patrick Mass cards to division members. John is on our Heritage Committee and was available for question/answer sessions associated with our Irish American Heritage Month displays at four regional libraries. John played a key role in the organizing the 2014 Halfway to St Patrick Day celebration. Further, John is being trained by a professional website designer to enable the creation of a new, dynamic, and current Meagher Division website.



Second in the Occasional Series on Irish Heroes

THEOBALD WOLFE TONE, THE UNITED IRISHMEN, AND THE RISING OF 1798

Wolf Tone was the founder of Irish Republicanism and one of the most important political leaders produced by any country in its struggle for national independence. In Wolfe Tone's era, the needs of Irish society were clear: Rid Ireland of the English and

'Landlordism_' to return the land to the Irish people. Following the examples of the American and French revolutions, Tone's goal was to establish the 'rights of man_' in Ireland. He was the first to propose the *re-conquest of Ireland by the Irish people*. The

greatness of Tone was his ability to unite the common people irrespective of their religious affiliations.

The English governed Ireland primarily through implementation of the Penal Laws which disenfranchised Catholics and `Dissenters`, primarily Presbyterians. Inspired by the American Revolution, Dissenters sought to form common cause with Catholics to achieve reform and greater autonomy from England.

In 1791 Wolfe Tone founded the United Irishmen. Tone's objectives were to unite Catholics and Protestants in the common goals of breaking the connection with England and asserting Irish independence.

The United Irishmen connected Catholics and Protestants to

“subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England, and to assert independence of my own country...to...unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of ‘Irishman’ in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter.”

To spread their anti-English messages, the United Irishmen established two newspapers: *The Northern Star* in Belfast and *The Evening Star* in Dublin

As the concept of Irish Nationalism took root, the revolutionary spirit grew as they witnessed American and French successes. After all, John Paul Jones had sailed into Belfast Bay in April 1778 and sank an

English man-of-war! In England the fear of an invasion ran high.

The English secretly formed and funded the `Peep-o`Day Boys` to wage war on Catholics. This group evolved into the Orange Order and declared their goal to ***exterminate all Catholics of the Kingdom of Ireland.*** The Orange Order supplied vital local intelligence.

Large groups of Orangemen, operating under the umbrella of English protection, burned Catholics homes and sent them ***to Hell or Connacht.*** In Armagh alone, more than 7,000 Catholic families were left homeless during the winter of 1795-96. The English also began a disinformation campaign; hoping Presbyterians might not rise if they believed the rebellion was merely a `popish` plot.

Despite growing strength (about 200,000 by 1797), Wolfe Tone travelled to the United States and to France to press the case for international support for an insurrection. He convinced the French of his ability to rally an Irish Army and helped plan a French attack against English interests in Ireland. In December 1796, a French fleet was ordered to Ireland's Bantry Bay to ***facilitate the Republican revolution and liberate the Irish people.*** Tone was aboard the French frigate *Indomptable*. The invasion was doomed from the start as British spies among French officers provided the early warning.

The English arrested most of the United Irishmen's leadership and instituted Martial Law. English General Lake was sent to Ulster to disarm the United Irishmen and to take actions well beyond the law. Using Orangemen, and others, atrocities followed: Irish women were raped; entire villages burned; and men, women and children were

slaughtered. Lake's terror and torture tactics included burning rebels alive, beheading, pitchcappingⁱ, and half-hanging (interrogation technique). In spite of these setbacks, the insurrection continued in the Irish countryside through 1798. In more than a dozen towns and villages surrounding Dublin, Irishmen went to war against the British.

Coincidentally, the Catholic Church withdrew support for the rebellion! In 1797 Napoleon captured The Papal States and renamed it the 'Roman Republic'. Pope Pius VI was taken prisoner and exiled to France, where he later died. The Church's fear of a similar secular rebellion in Ireland cause the Church (with few exceptions) to side with the Crown throughout the entire period of turmoil.

One important exception was in Wexford, where **Father John Murphy** rallied his countrymen to '*get armed in the best way we can, with pitchforks and other weapons, and attack.*' On June 21, 1798, the Wexford rising culminated with the **Battle of Vinegar Hill**. The Irish gallantly fought British artillery and musket fire with pikes and pitchforks. Hundreds were killed and the survivors were executed. Many were pitch capped; others beheaded, their bodies thrown into the River Slaney, while their heads were kicked around the streets or displayed on spikes in the Wexford market place. Irishmen's ears and noses were cut off as trophies.

Wolf Tone convinced the French to send reinforcements. In August, 1,000 French under command of General Humbert landed at Killala Bay. The French and Irish defeated General Lake at Castlebar ('*Castlebar races*_) under a green flag with the inscription '*Erin Go Bragh!*'_ General Cornwallis --

fresh from defeat at the hands of George Washington - used overwhelming force to compel Humbert's surrender at Ballinamuck on September 8th. The French were afforded prisoner of war status while their Irish comrades were slaughtered.

Unaware of Humbert's defeat, Wolfe Tone arrived off the coast of Donegal on October 12 aboard the French warship *Hoche*. With him were an additional 3,000 men along with artillery and ammunition. The British attacked them in Donegal Bay. After a fierce battle, the French force surrendered. Wolfe Tone was captured and convicted of treason. At sentencing he said: '**From my earliest youth I regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as a curse on the Irish nation and felt convinced that while it lasted this country would never be free or happy. I determined to apply all the powers ...to separate the two countries...and sought for aid wherever it was to be found...I courted poverty, left my beloved wife unprotected and my children fatherless... it is no great effort at this day to add the sacrifice of my life.**'_

Tone's requested to die a soldier's death by firing squad. The Cornwallis insisted he be executed as a criminal by hanging. Rather than suffer the indignity of death by hanging, Wolfe Tone managed to slit his own throat and died on November 19th 1798. Tone's suicide was the ultimate act of contempt for Cornwallis. With Tone's death, the rebellion was over.

THE PENAL LAWS (Irish: *Na Péindlíthe*)

When England implemented the Penal Laws in 1697, Irish Catholics were stripped of every basic human right. As a race, the Irish suffered through iron-fisted occupation and survived under these laws specifically designed to totally disenfranchise them. The way to *not* violate these laws was to convert to the state religion established by the English – the Anglican Church/Church of Ireland. The last of the penal laws were not repealed until 1920.

EARLY CHRISTIAN CARVED FIGURES, COUNTY FERMANAGH



These figures lay in ruins for 400 years before being used as building stones in a Romanesque style church built ca 1250 AD. They were reused as building blocks in the new church; the builders had no interest in their historical value and just used them as building stones.

The stone carving style may have its roots in the pagan era, but there is no doubt these figures are Christian and carried Biblical messages. Sockets in the heads and rough stumps under the feet suggest the stones were structural members, to be set into something and to support something else on their heads. They may have been structural supports in an earlier church, in a large pulpit, in a shrine, or in the internal fittings of a church. They are probably of the same era the Irish high crosses, likely in the 9th and 10th centuries. The figures are impressive in size and there is an individuality of the faces, despite an overall similarity. All stare fixedly forward. Eyes are round and brows are prominent, mouths small, hands and feet very small. Most wear the long tunic with bottom hem and sometimes front seam, familiar from manuscript and metalwork illustrations of churchmen. One figure was found as recently as 1958 and more may remain hidden.

THE STORY OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY: THE IRISH LINK

Excerpts from a posted by Totally Irish Gifts on February 7, 2015 in *Wild Geese*

Fr. John Spratt was an Irish Carmelite and a well-known preacher, who worked among the poor in the Liberties in Dublin, Ireland. He built a church 'Our Lady of Mount Carmel' on Whitefriar Street. Fr. Spratt visited Rome in 1835 and while there he preached at the Gesu, a famous Jesuit church, where many of the Roman elite came to hear him.

While there, he was given many gifts, including a gift from Pope Gregory XVI -- the remains of Saint Valentine, including a small vessel with this blood, which had been found during renovations of the basilica built over the site of his grave. Perhaps Pope Gregory XVI was also anxious for Ireland to receive a holy relic because Roman Catholics were beginning to be

St. Valentine's remains arrived in Dublin on 10th November 1836 and were brought by procession to Whitefriar Street Church, received by Archbishop Murray of Dublin. An accompanying letter, in Latin, read:

On the death of Fr. Spratt, the relics were put into storage. In the 1950/60s the Whitefriar Street Church underwent extensive renovations and a special altar and shrine were built to house St. Valentine's relics. A wooden casket with St. Valentine's remains lies beneath a marble altar to the right side of the main altar. The top of the casket has the coat of arms of Gregory XVI and a letter of Cardinal Odescalchi inscribed in English on two large gold plates. Another smaller plate inscribed 'This shrine contains the sacred body of Saint Valentinus the Martyr, together with a small vessel tinged with his blood.'

Couples come to visit St. Valentine throughout the year to pray to him to watch over them. On St. Valentine's Day, 14th February, the relics are placed on the high altar in the church and celebrated at the masses, with special sermons and a 'Blessing of the Rings' for couples about to be married.

SOME FEBRUARY DATES OF IRISH INTEREST

- 1st: 1796 **Theobald Wolf Tone**, United Irish leader, arrives in France seeking assistance
- 3d 1919 - Harry Boland and Michael Collins engineer Eamon de Valera's escape from Lincoln Jail in England. He is dressed as a woman
- 4th: 1775 - Birth of **Robert Emmett**, Irish patriot
- 7th: 1877 - **John O'Mahony**, founder of the Fenian Brotherhood in US, dies in New York



GUEST SPEAKERS

Genealogist's Visit: Ms. Shannon Bennett will speak on Irish research and DNA testing at our April 21st meeting. Information on Ms. Bennett can be found at (tntfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/)

Visit to Belfast: Looking forward to May, Brother Jeff Banks will discuss his recent trip during which he visited Falls Road and Shankill; signed the "Peace Wall" (it is the new Berlin Wall of Europe) and will relate his impressions based on talks with locals (primarily from the Falls area) to get a sense of the good, the bad, and the ugly. He suggests it a very delicate peace right now; mid-July's bonfires and Orange Order parades are not helping to secure long term peace...

Irish Historian: Looking forward to September, we're planning on Kevin Donleavy of Charlottesville. Kevin is author of *The Irish in Early Virginia 1600-1860*, a past Fellow at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, a retired Latin teacher, and he plays in an Irish band. His commitment to Irish cultural history spans forty years. He also has an Irish radio program heard on WTJU.net.



OUR DIVISION PRAYER LIST

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Past Division President Phil Booty and Gail Monahan, Brother Jim McMorrow's daughter; may God's perpetual light shine upon them; may they rest in peace.

Please keep in your prayers Brothers Bill McCarthy, Des Flanigan, Joe O'Connor, Mike Lenihan, David Lee Chichester, Larry Pratt, Mike Creegan (VAAOH webmaster), and spouses Joan McCarthy, Patty O'Brien, and Connie Buttimer. Also, Matthew Carroll, the inspiration for the Irish Viet Nam Veterans Memorial Project.

Pray to Mary Immaculate Patroness of the United States for the strength of mind and heart to defend our religious freedoms, for national moral guidance, and that this country will always be *'one nation, under God'*. This is critically important in this time of contrary moral agendas and the threats from patently evil elements.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars!

March 1-31: *Irish-American Heritage Month* displays will be set up at the Rappahannock Central Library, Salem Church Library and the Wilderness Library. On appointed days, Heritage Committee brothers will be available to answer questions and hand out literature. We can use additional help with this!

March 7: *Ballyshaners Alexandria St. Patrick's Day parade.* The theme of this year's parade is "Women of Irish Heritage." Our Grand Marshal is Laureen O'Neill James, head of the O'Neill-James School of Irish Dance.

March 9: *Annual Gaelic Mass:* 7:30 PM, **Holy Family Church**, 14160 Ferndale Road, Dale City, Virginia 22193, a reception in Griffin Hall following Mass.

March 12: *Sixth Annual St Patrick Dinner* at Holy Cross Academy (*tentative*)

March 14: *Twelfth Annual St Patrick Day Parade* /Kick-off Seventh Annual Trip for Two to Ireland Raffle

March 17: *Second Annual Meagher Division St Patrick Day Mass* at St Patrick Church (*tentative*); Division Meeting

April 20: *Second Annual Shamrock Charity Golf Classic*, Meadows Farms Golf Course, Locust Grove, VA

April 21: Genealogist, *Ms. Shannon Bennett*, will speak at our meeting about *Irish Research and DNA Analysis.*

May 19: Brother Jeff Banks will relate his *Visit to Belfast*, in the north of Ireland

September 15: Kevin Dunleavy will speak on the *Irish in Virginia 1600-1860*

Editor: Bill Halpin

1. The process involved pouring hot tar into a conical shaped paper "cap", which was forced onto a suspect's head, allowed to cool, and then rapidly removed, taking with it a portion of the suspect's skin and tissue. This torture was usually preceded by the crude shearing of the victim's hair/scalp.