

SCÉAL ÉILE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COOLEY-KEEGAN BRANCH OF COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN



Chair's Message



A Chairde,

Happy New Year to all of you! I hope you had an enjoyable holiday season and are ready to embrace all that 2025 holds for you.

We will have our St. Brigid's Day/Mary McDonagh Memorial Céilí on Sunday, February 9th. On Sunday, March 23rd, please join us for a St. Patrick's Céilí.

At this point we are not sure that a CCÉ float in the St. Patrick's Day parade will be feasible. Due to retirement, we have lost our long-time supporter, and we have to find a truck and driver that will fit our needs.

In April, the annual Comhaltas North America convention will be held in Orlando, Florida from April 3th to the 6th. Registration and hotel bookings are now open.

Thank you all for supporting so many events last year. Please continue your efforts to bring new people into our community. We also appreciate any ideas from you to help our branch continue to thrive.

Slán,

Susan Keith, Chair



St. Patrick's Day CCÉ Float Help Needed



We need the following:

- a truck (hopefully the same size as last year's so that the float's structure doesn't have to be resized)
- a driver
- people to help with building and tearing down the float
- leads on where our crates can be stored and built in the future

Watch for an email announcing a meeting for all interested.



FOUNDED IN 1951, COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN IS IRELAND'S PREMIERE CULTURAL MOVEMENT. WHEN YOU JOIN COMHALTAS, YOU JOIN PEOPLE IN MORE THAN 400 BRANCHES WORLDWIDE IN SUPPORT OF THE TRADITIONAL IRISH ARTS OF MUSIC, DANCE AND LANGUAGE. WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS. PLEASE CONTACT THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION OR VISIT US AT: [HTTPS://SF COOLEYKEEGAN CCE.ORG](https://sfcooleykeegancce.org)



2025 -- Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Convention



Comhaltas North America is coming to Florida for its North American Convention with a major Weekend Festival of Irish Music, Song and Dance and Irish Language. Featuring The John Whelan All-Star Céilí Band.

Book your hotel room and register for the event at the link provided below:

www.cceconvention.com



Winter/ Spring Céilís



St. Brigid's Day / Mary McDonagh Memorial Céilí

Sunday, February 9th, 2025

Please join us at the United Irish Cultural Center from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm.

Admission: Comhaltas Members \$15, non Comhaltas members \$20. Music by St. Brigid Céilí Band

St. Patrick's Céilí

Sunday, March 23rd, 2025

Please join us at the United Irish Cultural Center from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm.

Admission: Comhaltas Members \$15, non Comhaltas members \$20. Music TBD



Song and Storytelling



Celtic singing sessions are on the first Friday of each month. They are held in people's homes around the Bay Area. Start time is usually 8pm and sessions typically go until 11pm or later.

For questions, to host, or to be added to the email list contact Michael Jones: mfj@ieee.org

2/7: Betsy Moore,
947 Primrose Ave, Sunnyvale

3/7: John & Anne Hopkirk,
145 Highland Avenue, San Carlos

4/4: Patrick & Elaine McEvoy,
251 Chestnut Ave, Palo Alto



Branch Meetings



CCÉ Cooley-Keegan branch meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm via Zoom.

If you wish to join, or need additional information, please contact our Secretary, Patricia Reilly, at: secretary@sfcooleykeegance.org



Irish Language Classes



Check with Josephine Brogan at Josephinebrogan@yahoo.com or 415-264-8856 for information on Irish Language Classes.



Irish Center 2025 Project



For more than 35 years, "The Center" has been our "home away from home". Our first convention in 1984 was hosted there and we have held numerous céilís, sessions, fundraisers, parties and weekly dance, language and music lessons. We enjoyed spontaneous dinners at the weekend in the restaurant and a monthly "CCÉ Night" which were very successful. We attended weddings, birthday parties and memorials throughout the year.

The building is now showing its age and will be unable to fulfill the needs of the coming generations. Exciting plans are underway and it will take the interest and participation of all of our community to ensure its success. We encourage you to check out the website to keep up to date on the progress. <https://irishcenter2025.org>

Community Events

The following set dance classes listed in this new section are being offered by individuals and groups and we are listing them as a public service. Please note that these classes/events are not sponsored/organized by the San Francisco Cooley-Keegan Comhaltas Branch.

Plough and Stars Dancing

There is set dancing at the Plough & Stars Bar on Clement Street on Thursday nights.

First Thursday will be from 8:00 pm to 11:00pm and every other Thursday 8:30 pm to 10:30 pm.

There is a \$10 charge. Supporting the bar by purchasing a beverage is much appreciated.

Band schedule:

Feb 6: Pigs in the Rigging
Feb 13: Barry and Vinny
Feb 20: Western Shore
Feb 27: Bog Buddies

March 06: Pigs in the Rigging
March 13: The O'Donnell Brothers
w/ Peter Persoff
March 20: Barry and Vinny
w/ Dave Cory
March 27: County Yolo Band

Contact Michael Murphy at
irishboogiemanager67@yahoo.com or
415-999-6062 for more information

Peninsula Set Dancing

Dancing at Alhambra Irish House resumes:
Address: 831 Main Street in Redwood
City

Date: Sunday, March 30
Time: 4-7pm
Cost: \$10 per dancer
Live music: Yes.
Dance styles: Set dancing;
Céilí dancing and Two-hands.
RSVP's appreciated.
Contact: Michael Murphy
Cell: 415-999-6062
Email: irishboogiemanager67@yahoo.com

Styles: Set dancing with some Céilí and Two-hand dances mixed in.

San Anselmo Dancing

Lead by Mícheál Minihihane. We meet the 2nd and 4th Fridays of most months from 7 to 9 pm. Join our email list by writing to sonomarinirish@gmail.com so that you can be assured of the dates.

No Partner Necessary \$10/person requested

New Location

Starting with the February classes, we will be at a different location:

167 Tunstead Ave, San Anselmo

Set Dance Workshop

Weekend Set Dance Workshop at Ireland's 32 Pub (upstairs)

Address: 3920 Geary Bl. (upstairs)

Date: Saturday, February 22

Time: 2-4:30pm

Cost: \$15 per dancer

Set dances planned to be covered:

Newport Set, Claddagh Set,

Level: Designed for experienced dancers, but some common steps and moves will be covered that can benefit everybody.

PLEASE RSVP

Contact: Michael Murphy

Cell: 415-999-6062

Email: irishboogiemanager67@yahoo.com

Set Dance Lessons

In February, lessons are on these Wednesdays:
Feb 12, 19, and 26.

Location: Ireland's 32,
3920 Geary Blvd., San Francisco
Time: 8:00-10:00 pm

March dates and location TBD.

Cost is \$10.00.

For more info contact Michael Murphy



Condolences



Our sincerest condolences to Martin Howard and family on the passing of Julia Howard. Julia and Martin have been long-time supporters of our Branch, attended many a céilí, and supported so many other Irish groups in SF. One of the best memories of Julia and Martin was the annual Wren party they attended each year at the Lundy's. Martin was persuaded to play his "Juice harp" and Julia was sitting along the wall with all the other ladies, enjoying their front row seats to all the singers, dancers, and even a heart rendered recitation. They were Home. God Bless Julia.



Condolences



Our last sympathies hit a bit closer to home with the recent passing of Katherine Scanlon.

From the early years, Katherine was the face you met at the door taking the monies at the Céilís with a warm welcome. Remember the boiled raisin cakes, meringues, and various cookies there to enjoy? That was Katherine too. There are many memories through the years with Katherine: the cuppas, chats, weddings and birthdays. But showing up at Katherine's house on Wren night for many, many years was a tradition. Met at the door by family and neighbors, there was nothing like getting a cup of hot tea (or something stronger) and an array of baked goods after a couple of hours of dancing at houses and pubs in the cold and rain. The kettle boiled all night and her salt and pepper collection added to the coziness of the night. They were good times filled with friendship and hospitality.

We extend our many thoughts and prayers to Joannie and Francie O'Leary, Patricia Culhane and all the family. We miss Katherine very much.



Condolences



Our heartfelt sympathy to Dan and James McAuliffe and family on the passing of Margaret McAuliffe. When thinking about Margaret, was there a board or group that she did not belong to? I remember long ago seeing Margaret run from one meeting to another at the Irish Center with son James in tow. March was always a marathon of Irish activities for Margaret. The most memorable are the St Patrick's Day events at the numerous rest homes, including the Laguna Honda. This was complete with decorations, Irish soda breads, high school volunteers to wheel patients, plus singers and dancers to mark the day! It is so wonderful to see the smiles, the toes tapping, and to hear the songs being sung by the residents. Dan and James, our hearts go out to you. Margaret is greatly missed.



Wren Boys 2024



“Go raibh maith agat” goes out to the one house and four pubs we visited on St. Stephen’s Day, December 26, 2024, to celebrate that grand Western Ireland custom of Wren Boys! For only the 3rd time in 29 years we started our trek to “bury the wren” at a pub instead of meeting at the Murphy house. We decided to give Wren hostess and “Wren carrier” extraordinaire, Maureen Murphy, a well-deserved rest from setting up the usual, original meeting venue.

To help us get a quick start this year, we met at the conveniently located Shannon Arms Pub in the Parkside District, where we practiced some new set dancing figures that hailed from other Ireland regions, for a change, in addition to our classic favorites that we’ve danced on the Wren for the past forty years! We appreciate Teresa Morris and staff for their wonderful hospitality and accommodation to use their space while we accomplished our prep stage and initiated our oft-repeated recitation of the Wren Verse.

Our only house this year was Seamus and Maureen Lundy’s residence that is never a disappointment when you consider that we’ve visited there for nearly 30 years; encounter 3-4 generations of enthusiastic Irish helping out Cooley-Keegan Branch of San Francisco upholding such noble Western Ireland tradition since 1985 that includes Seamus himself reciting his lively, humorous verses; and undergoing the treatfully treacherous adventure, worthy of being entered into the Guinness Book of Records, of dancing the Siege of Ennis about eight lines wide across a limited-space, living room floor of a Sunset District home. Can we squeeze in nine next year? I’m sure there will be no objection.

Many kudos and thanks goes to our brave Wren Boys trio of musicians: Chris Dillingham (low whistle & concertina); Jason Courtney (bouzouki) and Philip Batchelder (fiddle) supplying the peppily-paced music for the set dancing figures and céilí dances being done at all the venues. What’s especially impressive is how these members of The Pigs in the Rigging calmly and coolly churned out a couple of lively tunes while on a tight stage at the usually crowded and vivaciously loud O’Brien’s Pub.

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Wren Boys 2024



After we left Sunset/Parkside area, we Wren revelers sojourned officially for the first time, since the late 2010's, to the Richmond District. We haven't visited Ireland's 32 Pub in about 20 years, and it turned out to be a delightful surprise. The versatile bartender, Kerri Grimley, not only kept pouring out drinks to the patrons and Wren Boy participants, but even had the gumption to join us on the Siege of Ennis; definitely one of the highlights of this thrill-filled evening.

Our grand finale was our "local," The Plough and the Stars! We did our final Verse and string of set figures. Plus, we danced our perennial favorite, Connemara Reel Set, that customarily and officially ends our night of "Burying the Wren." And it was this last place that we saw one of our dancers, Ellen Eagan, bring the mischievously delightful character and singer, Robert Rodriguez, who performed his spoof of "Galway Bay".

On a sad note, but one with an appreciative tone: we've lost three individuals over the past year, who were very much a crucial part in contributing wonderful memories and fulfilling crucial roles in our 40 years of celebrating the Wren tradition in San Francisco: Lew Milligan (musician who started with us in the '80's); Ralph Mihan (dancer who I also considered our resident Wren jester); and never leastly, Katherine Scanlon, who was (and always will be) a Wren Boys institution since 1985.

A major segment of all the best memories that our St. Stephen's Day celebrations have provided belongs to our most frequent final stop: the Scanlon household on Cole Street, where the most gracious hostess of them all, Katherine Scanlon, would provide all the delectable goodies and "put on the kettle" after we (25-45) dancers & musicians, bedecked in our Wren Boy costumes, put on our yearly 20-minute impromptu performance (from 1985 until 2019) on the front sidewalk where passersby would be roped into a spontaneously spun Siege of Ennis; longtime neighbors joyously looking and listening on without nary a complaint during the hours as early as 11pm and even as late as (ahem) 1am (!) and capped off with the aforementioned Connemara Set.

I always remembered that refreshingly relaxed feeling of welcome I get whenever I walked into Katherine's house and meeting her "little helpers" (Jennifer, Michael and Nicholas) making sure everyone had what they needed after a long, exciting night of fulfilling a most worthy tradition of "burying the wren" accompanied by music, singing and dancing. What can I say? But good times and grand memories. Thank you, Mrs. Scanlon.

Thanks also goes out to Mícheál Minihane, co-host at Lundy House, who helped things run smoothly, and to all the guests there who contributed to all the fun goings-on. And please let us never forget the dancers and all the other Wren participants. We had a small crew of 17 this year, the smallest in about 30 years. However, despite the rain and many figures of dancing throughout the evening, their spirits never got dampened, and their fun energy never got exhausted! I am truly proud to be part of this group.

See y'all on the Wren in December 2025!

Slán,
"Captain of the Wren"



Member Hellos



Waving a big hello to Cathy Jones and Theresa Joyce with our best wishes!!!

— All your friends at CCÉ



December Céilí



About 100 people attended our céilí in December. In the holiday spirit, the band's name was the Tinsel Town Céilí Band, which included Darcy Noonan, Hector Bragado, Eamonn Flynn and Vinny Cronin.

During the break, we sang some Christmas carols and six of Darcy's young students entertained us with lovely tunes. It is so wonderful to see the youth show off their talents! We danced a good mix of céilí, sets, and couple dances. The goodies during the break were an extra treat!



SF Cooley-Keegan Comhaltas Membership 2025



Thanks to all who have renewed their membership. If you are unsure if you have renewed, please contact Joannie BEFORE you send it in at membership@sfcooleykeegancee.org

The Membership list is our way of advising you of information on upcoming events & sending you the Treoir magazine 3 times a year. Membership is effective January 1st to December 31st.

There are two options to renew or become a new member:

If you receive the Scéal Eile by email link from Josephine Brogan, please renew now by visiting our website:

https://www.sfcooleykeegancee.org/misc/join_cceck.html

Please complete the on-line form so we can match it with your PayPal payment. If you do not use PayPal, but do renew on-line, please forward a check to our *PO Box shown below.

If you receive the Scéal Eile by U.S. mail, a renewal form with your name was included in the recent Scéal Eile.

Contact Joannie if you need a new form or you may renew at the February 4th céilí.

Please make any necessary changes and mail it along with your check to our PO Box shown below. (Please note we do not bill.)

Single Membership: \$40.00

Multi-Membership: \$50.00 (2 or more in household or family)

If you have any questions, please contact Joannie at 415-664-6579 or membership@sfcooleykeegancee.org

Thank you for your support.

CCÉ Membership, Attn: Joannie O'Leary, *PO Box 16244, San Francisco, CA 94116



Stay up to date on céilís, seisiúns, and other events by checking out our Cooley-Keegan Facebook page. In the search field at the top of your facebook page enter **Cooley-Keegan Branch**, select it from the list of choices or enter the following:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064373092151456882161020939/>



Another online group where events are planned is [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com/irishdance) at the following URL:
[meetup.com/irishdance](https://www.meetup.com/irishdance)



Irish Culture Bay Area



IrishCultureBayArea.com



Set Dancing



Mondays:

- Starry Plough in Berkeley: Céilí dancing on Mondays. Lessons from 7-9pm live music from 9-11pm.
Contact: Danny Botello mr.dannyb@gmail.com or Michael Rael michaelbpr@gmail.com

Wednesdays:

- Ireland's 32 for lessons. Contact: Michael Murphy at irishboogiemanager67@yahoo.com or 415-999-6062
See previous section for details.

1st Thursday: Plough and Stars in San Francisco at 8pm. \$10 suggested to support the music.

2nd through last Thursdays:

- Plough and Stars in San Francisco at 8:30pm.
Dancers are encouraged to contribute \$10 to support the live music.
Contact: Michael Murphy at irishboogiemanager67@yahoo.com or 415-999-6062

2nd and 4th Fridays:

- 167 Tunstead Ave, San Anselmo: From 7-9pm.
There is a \$10 donation suggested for this class.
Contact: Nellie at sonomarinirish@gmail.com



Seisiún



Song and Storytelling Seisiún: Held on the first Friday of each month,
See **Song and Storytelling** section for details.

COOLEY-KEEGAN BRANCH OF
COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN
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