

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2018

MEÁN FÓMHAIR / DEIREADH FÓMHAIR

# SCÉAL ÉILE

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



Slán go fóillín, a Nikki



We take this opportunity to dedicate this September/October issue of Sceil Eile to our very special Treoraí na Gaeilge (Gaelic Officer), Nikki Ragsdale.

We bid a fond farewell “for a while” to our cherished Nikki as she moves to Arizona to begin a new chapter of her life. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Nikki for all her service which was freely given in a very light-hearted and generous spirit. In 2002, Nikki organized an Oíche Ghaeltachta evening (Irish Language evening) at the United Irish Cultural Center on the 3rd Sunday of each month. These began with dinner and Irish conversation. This led to Irish Language Classes at the Irish Center with Imelda White. Through her contacts in the world of Irish language, Nikki put San Francisco on the map with her annual “Deireadh Seachtaine Gaeltachta”. This Irish Immersion Weekend every September fills the UICC with native speakers and novices sharing “séisiún - craic & ceol” in addition to all the language workshops. Nikki’s good friend, John Larkin, now continues this tradition in its 20th year!! See details in this Sceil for the 2018 information.

We celebrated with Nikki at a wonderful evening on August 12th at the United Irish Cultural Center. It was filled with good company, friendship, music, song and poems and stories in the Irish Language – all dear to Nikki’s heart. (see photos)

The mighty duo of Nikki Ragsdale and Imelda White have greatly enhanced the opportunity to learn and share the Irish language. Please see Imelda’s delightful account below of Nikki’s adventures and history. I have personally enjoyed hearing some of these stories and songs from Nikki over the years! On behalf of the SF Cooley-Keegan Branch, Nikki we thank you for your dedication, friendship and love of all things Irish. *Go raibh míle maith agat.*

Joannie O’Leary



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 ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://SF.CCEWEST.ORG](http://sf.ccewest.org)



## Stán go fóillín, a Nikki



*(back row) Imelda White, Conal & Janet Barber, Sean Seamus Larkin;  
(front row) Denis Howard, Nikki Ragsdale, Tadhg & Galt Barber*

Nikki Ragsdale came to me to study the Irish language around about 1987 or 1988. She was an incredibly motivated and fast learner and quickly became fluent in the language. She then went on to learn sean nós singing, céilí dancing, set dancing and playing the bodhrán. She has served as Treoraí na Gaeilge for Comhaltas for many years and organized a very successful Irish Language immersion weekend at the Irish Cultural Center every September for the past 20 years.

Nikki was always interested in music. She spent her teen years in Munich, Germany where her father worked as an engineer during the 60's and 70's. During those heady years of Rock 'n Roll, Nikki spent a lot of her time in the music and dance clubs in Munich and rubbed shoulders with the young Jimi Hendrix, The Kinks, David Bowie and many other well known performers that frequented the famous clubs of Munich. Her first job out of school was as a DJ at the PN Hithouse in Munich. Rock 'n Roll was her passion!

Nikki returned to California with her parents but missed the European music scene and soon returned, this time to London. Here she found a job and continued to revel in the Rock 'n Roll world of music. Life was good!

In London, a girlfriend invited Nikki to accompany her on a tourist trip to Ireland. Nikki knew nothing about Ireland or Irish culture but she accepted the invitation and went. They travelled to Connemara and stayed in a small cottage with a local Irish speaking family. Nikki didn't understand a word the people were saying to her but knew there was something very special about what she heard. Later on, in the pubs, she listened to a lot of traditional music and sean nós singing and something stirred in her soul that changed her forever.

She packed up in London and returned to San Francisco where she began her new life totally immersed in the learning of Irish language, music, dancing, art and culture. For years she participated in the Renaissance Faire O'Neill clan pageant, now with her Irish Wolfhound named Fionn. After Fionn came Artagán and most recently, Rua, the largest of the three. Rua just passed away a few months ago. Nikki drives a classic, beautifully restored Cadillac with the back seat converted to a platform for the large dogs!

In 2010, TG4, the Irish Language TV Channel made a documentary on Nikki in two half hour segments titled "Rock Chick an tSean-Nóis" or "The Rock Chick of Sean-Nós". Nikki also published a memoir, *The Light in the Storm* in 2014. Her CD, *Seansaol na hAislinge*, the old life of the dream, is a beautiful collection of sean nós songs that surely convinces the listener of Nikki's complete transformation from Rock Chick to Sean Nóis!

Imelda White



## Slán go fóillín, a Nikki



*Celebration with Nikki at a wonderful evening filled with good company, friendship, music, song and poems and stories in the Irish Language.*



## Comhaltas Community



Marty McCullagh, our truck driver extraordinaire for the St Patrick's Day Parade for several years, passed away on July 26th. This proud County Tyrone man bravely fought the battle that cancer brought to his life for the past year. Marty proudly reveled in his role as driver for our Comhaltas float in the Parade. He would get us back safely to Cunningham's Yard and head back downtown to meet his wife, Noreen, son Banan (4yrs) and daughter Grace (2yrs) to continue the "Paddy's Day celebrations". 2018 was no exception, despite his ongoing illness. Before starting out, Marty shyly accepted our "Driver of the Year" award. In typical good-nature, he expertly guided us through the parade route, happily greeting all the many friends who called out to him.

Marty was buried in his native Castlederg. A celebration of his life with beautiful stories by Noreen and Marty's sister, was held on August 18th at Holy Name Church, SF. We offer our heartfelt prayers to Noreen, Banan, Grace and the McCullagh and Gallagher families.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilis.



CCÉ has a facebook group where we can share photos, ask questions and generally discuss all things Irish music and dance. On your facebook page search for **Cooley-Keegan Branch**. Or, you can enter the following URL:

[facebook.com/groups/316504905030686](https://facebook.com/groups/316504905030686)



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

[meetup.com/irishdance](https://meetup.com/irishdance)





## Song and Storytelling



The next Song and Storytelling Seisiún will be hosted on September 7<sup>th</sup> by Bill & Peri Frantz  
 16345 Englewood Ave.  
 Los Gatos, CA 95032  
 408 356 8506  
 frantz@pwpconsult.com

The October Seisiún on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the host is  
 Michelle Valdez  
 4049 Holly Drive  
 San Jose, CA 95127  
 (408) 254 2252  
 valdezma@att.net

In November the seisiún is on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.  
 Patrick & Elaine McEvoy  
 251 Chestnut  
 Palo Alto  
 (650) 493 3773  
 swagman@swagman.com

Contact Michael Jones for info about seisiúns at  
 mfj@ieee.org. Seisiúns start at 7:30pm.



## Special Events



On the first two Saturdays of October 2018, the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> we will have set dancing workshops at Lilly Mac's Pub, 187 S. Murphy Avenue in Sunnyvale between Evelyn and Washington Aves. Upstairs. 3-5pm. \$10 admission.

A ceili workshop will be held on October 27<sup>th</sup> at Lilly Mac's.

Contact: Michael Murphy, 415-999-6062,  
 irishboogieman0@gmail.com.



## Member News



We extend our deepest sympathy to our own Kasey Curtin on the passing of her sister, Bonnie Lee in New Jersey. Kasey and her daughter, Geli were fortunate to visit with Bonnie Lee earlier this year and share many stories of good and memorable times with their sister and aunt.

Her funeral mass, attended by Kasey and Geli was concelebrated by three priests and they were surrounded by members of so many organizations that Bonnie Lee faithfully participated in. We remember the Curtin family in our thoughts and prayers. May Bonnie Lee rest in peace.



## Events each Month



**Comhaltas Night with Live Irish Music** - CCÉ typically hosts a night of set dancing at the UICC on the third Saturday of the month from 7:30pm to 11pm. For September the event will on the 15<sup>th</sup>, in October we will meet on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Contact: Michael Riemer at riemer@ce.berkeley.edu.

**San Francisco** - On Thursdays, CCÉ hosts set dancing classes at the UICC starting at 7:30pm followed by more dancing at the Plough & Stars until 11:30pm -- except for the first Thursday of the month when there is no class, just dancing at the Plough & Stars from 8-11pm. \$5 donation suggested. Contact: Josephine Brogan at josephinebrogan@yahoo.com or 415-264-8856.

**South Bay/Peninsula** - Tuesday night set dancing (with a smidgen of céilí style) at Lilly Mac's in Sunnyvale (upstairs); 187 S. Murphy Avenue between Evelyn and Washington Avenues. It is every Tuesday (except 3rd Tues. of the month); 8-10pm; Suggested donation is \$7. Mostly live bands. Contact: Michael Murphy at 415-999-6062 or irishboogieman0@gmail.com.

**North Bay** - Mary McDonagh and Mícheál Minihane teach set dancing on the second and fourth Fridays of the month at Brosnan School of Irish Dance in San Anselmo from 7-9pm. There is a \$5 donation suggested for this class. Mary and Mícheál also teach at the Redwood Cafe in Cotati on the first and third Wednesday. Contact: Mary McDonagh at cladaghdancer@gmail.com or Mícheál Minihane michealminihane@yahoo.com.

**East Bay** - Starry Plough in Berkeley hosts céilí dancing on Mondays. Lessons from 7-9pm and dancing to live music from 9-11pm. Contact: John Slaymaker at rinnce.mor@gmail.com.

*See calendar page for address, phone number and web page for all venues.*



## Irish Language Class



New 8 week Irish Language class starts on October 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 at the United Irish Cultural Center, San Francisco. Registration in advance is required. Please contact Josephine Brogan at josephinebrogan@yahoo.com or 415-264-8856 for further information.



## Deireadh Seachtaine Gaeltachta



The 20th Annual Irish Language Immersion Weekend, Deireadh Seachtaine Gaeltachta takes place in San Francisco September 28th - 30th, 2018.

Four levels, intensive tutorials that focus on spoken language and increasing fluency taught by top caliber native Irish speaking teachers. There will be a children's class as well. Meals and snacks provided. Music and song seisiúin each evening.

Venue: United Irish Cultural Center, San Francisco. For more information and enrollment, email Seán Séamus at [LarkinMap@gmail.com](mailto:LarkinMap@gmail.com) or 415-299-0850. See attached flyer.



### Branch Meetings



CCÉ Cooley-Keegan branch meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month, 7:30pm at the UICC. Upcoming meeting: September 4<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup>. All members are encouraged to attend.

For further information, contact Maureen Callanan [mcallanan2354@gmail.com](mailto:mcallanan2354@gmail.com).



### 2020 Convention Meetings



Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7pm at the UICC. Upcoming meeting dates: September 18<sup>th</sup> and October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Contact any of the Cooley-Keegan board members if you'd like to get involved in what is going to be an incredible and memorable event!

**Convention dates: April 16 - 19, 2020.**  
**<http://www.cceconvention2020.com>**

For more information contact Maureen Callanan: [mcallanan2354@gmail.com](mailto:mcallanan2354@gmail.com).



### Community News



Congratulations and Best Wishes to Aine Minihane and Abram Smith on their recent Wedding, Wishing them a long and happy life together.

Sincere sympathy to Bill Nesbitt and family on the recent passing of his brother, Robert Nesbitt.

We would like to offer our sincere sympathy to the family of Alan Beale, Set Dancing Teacher in Chicago, who passed away unexpectedly in July.

Our sincere condolences to our Set Dancing friend, Tony McLaughlin and family, Chicago, on the recent passing of his brother, Patrick.



### Big Draw



Comhaltas in Ireland is sponsoring a BIG DRAW again this year. This is a fundraiser for individual branches. Prizes are \$5,000, \$500, \$250, \$150 Gift Card and other consolation prizes.

Tickets are \$5 each and are available for purchase at Thursday night dancing and CCÉ nights at the UICC. See Josephine Brennan, Josephine Brogan or Maureen Murphy and buy your winning ticket!!

Last date for ticket sales is CCÉ night on Saturday October 20<sup>th</sup> WE KEEP 80% OF WHAT OUR BRANCH SELLS SO PLEASE SUPPORT OUR BRANCH



### CCÉ 2019 Membership



Please renew your membership by November 1, 2018 so we can send them to Ireland. If you receive your Scéal Eile by US Mail, a membership form is attached here for your convenience. Josephine Brogan will send a special email to those who receive the Scéal link electronically, so you can renew. Please be sure your contact information is current. Our Membership runs from January 1 to December 31st.

Single Membership: \$40.00

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

Here are ways you can re/new:

- Renew online through our website and remit payment through PayPal: [sf.ccewest.org](http://sf.ccewest.org);
- Renew online through our website and send your check to our PO Box (We do NOT bill).
- Complete your membership form and either give it with your check or cash to Josephine Brogan at set dancing or mail it with your check to our PO Box.

If you have any questions, please contact Joannie at 415 664-6579 or [joannieoleary@msn.com](mailto:joannieoleary@msn.com); Or talk with Josephine at dancing. Thank you for your support.

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

0							Meán Fómhair 2018						
DÉ DOMHAINE SUNDAY		DÉ LUAN MONDAY		DÉ MÁIRT TUESDAY		DÉ CEADAoine WEDNESDAY		DÉARDAoine THURSDAY		DÉ h-Aoine FRIDAY		DÉ SATHAINE SATURDAY	
Aug 26		27		28		29		30		31		Sep 1	
<u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars		<u>Céilí dancing</u> Starry Plough		<u>Set Dancing</u> Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale <u>Seisiún</u> Plough and Stars				<u>Set Dancing</u> UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ Crooked Road					
2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
<u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars		<u>Céilí dancing</u> Starry Plough		<u>CCÉ Meeting</u> UICC 7:30pm <u>Set Dancing</u> Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale <u>Seisiún</u> Plough and Stars		Set Dancing Redwood Cafe Cotati		<u>Set Dancing</u> Plough & Stars w/ Shannon Céilí Band		<u>Song Seisiún</u> Bill & Perí Frantz 16345 Englewood Ave. Los Gatos 408 356 8506			
9		11		11		12		13		14		15	
<u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars  <u>Children's Workshop</u> UICC 3-6pm		<u>Céilí dancing</u> Starry Plough		<u>Set Dancing</u> Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale <u>Set Dancing</u> Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale <u>Seisiún</u> Plough and Stars				<u>Set Dancing</u> UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ Emperor Norton Céilí Band		<u>Set Dancing</u> Brosnan Dance Studio San Anselmo		<u>Comhaltas Night</u> UICC 7:30-11pm w/ live music	
16		17		18		19		20		21		22	
<u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars		<u>Céilí dancing</u> Starry Plough		<u>2020 Convention Meeting</u> UICC 7pm <u>Seisiún</u> Plough and Stars		Set Dancing Redwood Cafe Cotati		<u>Set Dancing</u> UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ Topsy House					
23		24		25		26		27		28		29	
<u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars		<u>Céilí dancing</u> Starry Plough		<u>Set Dancing</u> Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale <u>Seisiún</u> - Plough and Stars				<u>Set Dancing</u> UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ John Whelan and Haley Richardson		<u>Set Dancing</u> Brosnan Dance Studio San Anselmo			



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 YOUTH OFFICER: CAOIMHE LYONS

# Oireadh Fómhair 2018

Dé Domhnaigh SUNDAY	Dé Luan MONDAY	Dé Mairt TUESDAY	Dé Céadaoin WEDNESDAY	Déardaoin THURSDAY	Dé h-Aoine FRIDAY	Dé Sathairn SATURDAY
Sep 30 Seisiún - Plough and Stars	Oct 1 Céilí dancing Starry Plough	2 CCÉ Meeting UICC 7:30pm Set Dancing Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale Seisiún Plough and Stars	3 Set Dancing Redwood Cafe Cotati	4 Set Dancing Plough & Stars w/ Shannon Céilí Band	5 Song Seisiún Michelle Valdez 4049 Holly Drive San Jose 408-254-2252	6 Set Dancing Workshop Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale
7 Seisiún - Plough and Stars	8 Céilí dancing Starry Plough	9 Set Dancing Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale Seisiún Plough and Stars	10	11 Set Dancing UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ The Crooked Road	12 Set Dancing Brosnan Dance Studio San Anselmo	13 Set Dancing Workshop Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale
14 Seisiún - Plough and Stars	15 Céilí dancing Starry Plough	16 2020 Convention Meeting UICC 7pm Seisiún Plough and Stars	17 Set Dancing Redwood Cafe Cotati	18 Set Dancing UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ Emperor Norton Céilí Band	19	20 Comhaltas Night UICC 7:30-11pm w/ live music
21 Seisiún - Plough and Stars	22 Céilí dancing Starry Plough	23 Set Dancing Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale Seisiún Plough and Stars	24	25 Set Dancing UICC for class Plough & Stars w/ Tipsy House	26 Set Dancing Brosnan Dance Studio San Anselmo	27 Céilí Dancing Workshop Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale
28 Seisiún - Plough and Stars	29 Céilí dancing Starry Plough	30 Set Dancing Lilly Mac's, Sunnyvale Seisiún - Plough and Stars	31	Nov 1 Set Dancing Plough & Stars w/ Shannon Céilí Band	2 Song Seisiún Patrick & Elaine McEvoy 251 Chestnut Palo Alto 650-493-3773	3

**Brosnan School of Irish Dance** - 11 Belle Avenue, Suite B, San Anselmo, CA 94960 [brosnanschool.com](http://brosnanschool.com)

**Lilly Mac's** - 187 S. Murphy Ave, Sunnyvale (between Washington and Evelyn Avenues) 408-732-0200 [lillymacs.com](http://lillymacs.com)

**Plough and Stars** - 116 Clement Ave. (Between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>), San Francisco, 415-751-1122 [theploughandstars.com](http://theploughandstars.com)

**Redwood Cafe** - 8240 Old Redwood Hwy, Cotati CA 94931 707-795-7868 [redwoodcafe.com](http://redwoodcafe.com)

**UICC** - United Irish Cultural Center - 2700 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. (At Sloat Blvd.), San Francisco, 415-661-2700 [irishcentersf.org](http://irishcentersf.org)

**Starry Plough** - 3101 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley 510-841-2082 [starryploughpub.com](http://starryploughpub.com)

You can also visit the following website for events:

**San Francisco CCÉ - Cooley-Keegan Branch** - [sf.ccewest.org](http://sf.ccewest.org)



## Set Dancing



### **Mondays:**

- Starry Plough in Berkeley: Céilí dancing on Mondays. Lessons from 7-9pm and dancing to live music from 9-11pm. Contact: John Slaymaker (rinnce.mor@gmail.com)

### **Tuesdays:**

- Lilly Mac's in Sunnyvale (except for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday). Lessons: 7:30pm; Dance to live music 8-10pm. \$7 suggested to support the live music. Contact: Michael Murphy (415-999-6062)

### **Special Events:**

- Redwood Cafe in Cotati.  
Contact: Mary McDonagh (cladaghdancer@gmail.com), Mícheál Minihane (michealminihane@yahoo.com)

**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday:** Plough and Stars in San Francisco at 8pm. Music by the Shannon Céilí Band. \$5 suggested to support the live music.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> through last Thursdays:**

- Lessons at the United Irish Cultural Center (UICC) in San Francisco at 7:30pm in the bar area. Taped music:
- Plough and Stars in San Francisco at 9:30pm.  
Live traditional music featuring Topsy House, Emperor Norton Céilí Band and other fine bands.  
Dancers are encouraged to contribute \$5 to support the live music.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays:**

- Brosnan School of Irish Dance in San Anselmo: From 7-9pm. There is a \$5 donation suggested for this class.  
Contact: Mary McDonagh (cladaghdancer@gmail.com), Mícheál Minihane (michealminihane@yahoo.com)



## Seisiún



**Seisiún:** - Sundays and Tuesdays starting at 8:30 at the Plough and Stars, various hosts.

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

COOLEY-KEEGAN BRANCH OF  
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