

*Cumann Gaelach na Ginéimhe*

# Geneva Irish Association

Association Irlandaise de Genève

Nuachtlitir / Newsletter

October – November 2005



## *Letter from the President* *30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Charity Gala* *3<sup>rd</sup> December in the Ramada Hotel*

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### Quick Reminder of Upcoming Events:

Poker Classic, 3 November  
La Romana Italian Restaurant

G.I.A./GEDS Play Reading,  
8 November, English Church  
Hall, 8pm

G.I.A. 30th Anniversary  
Charity Gala, 3 December,  
Ramada Hotel, 8 pm

When I made my first visit to Geneva by train as a student in 1975, I remember thinking how sterile the city was. Picturesque settings, lakes and mountains weren't a priority for me and my buddy, who were occupied by other distractions. To be honest, I can't even recall why we came here. However, as history would have it, I enjoyed two consecutive "New Years" here in Geneva as part of a group from the "Inter Hospital Social Club". Again, I don't really know why we came to Geneva...I think it had something to do with "empty legs" of an Aer-Lingus flight being available for cheap charter. Throughout these visits, it never occurred to me at any stage that I would later enjoy the opportunity to pursue a "lakeside" career. And so, it still amazes me to recall the genesis of my personal involvement with Geneva that originated about 30 years ago.

Coincidentally, it was around that time that the Geneva Irish Association came into existence. The small group, convened under the guidance of the first President Seamus Magee, set an enviable foundation for what has become the present day Geneva Irish Association. While originally intended as a small informal forum for the increasing number of Irish people working in Geneva, it has now grown and increased in stature developing into a more formal vibrant organisation that continues to facilitate shared and collective cultural interaction among Irish people with our Swiss counterparts. The organisation fulfils a key role as a first informal point of contact for Irish people working and living in Geneva and its environs. Moreover, it is intended as a catalyst for Irish culture and activity throughout the cantons of both Geneva and Vaud as well as France voisine. Its importance to the Irish and Swiss community alike is reflected by the increasing membership and diversity of participants in the social activity offered by the GIA throughout the year.

Supported by a dedicated committee, I am proud and honoured to be the President of the Geneva Irish Association at this time of celebration and reflection. I look forward to meeting you all at our forthcoming Gala charity evening in the Ramada Hotel, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December.



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## ***G.I.A. Poker Classic – 3 November!***

The next ‘Craic Night’ will be held on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November and the activity will be a Poker Classic. It will be held at the La Romana Italian Restaurant, 37, rue de Vermont starting at 8.00pm sharp. The format will be seven tables of seven with the winner from each table going on to play a final. There will be cash prizes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and all money taken on the night will be given out in prizes.

Price to enter and play: CHF 10 (GIA members), CHF 15 (GIA non members)

To book please phone/text: 079-2784851 / email [ehlaird@bluewin.ch](mailto:ehlaird@bluewin.ch)

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis - so please book early.

Drinks will be available on the night from the restaurant’s bar and anyone going directly from work could eat in the restaurant before the cards begin.

There is plenty of parking available at the rear of the restaurant. See flyer elsewhere in this newsletter with location map.

## ***G.I.A./GEDs Play Reading – 8 November!***

As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Geneva English Drama Society and the Geneva Irish Association are jointly hosting a reading of an Irish play “Playboy of the Western World” by J. M. Synge.

This will be held on ***Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> November in the downstairs hall of the Holy Trinity Church, 14bis rue de Mont Blanc.*** It starts at 8.00pm. A cash bar is available as from 7.30pm, with GEDS kindly providing some nibbles. The bar will open again during the interval and after the play reading, so GEDS has ample opportunity of welcoming, meeting and chatting with GIA members. We would encourage you to come along to what will definitely be a most enjoyable and entertaining evening and we look very much forward to seeing you there.

Admission is free for GIA and GEDS members and CHF 5.00 for non-members.

We have had a very positive response to participate in this play reading and are almost ready to roll, but there are still a few unfilled parts. Undernoted is the cast of the play:

*Christoper Mahon* – Playboy (late twenties/early thirties)

*Old Mahon*, (his father, a squatter)

*Michael James Flaherty*, called Michael James (a publican.)

*Margaret Flaherty*, called Pegeen Mike (his daughter, mid-twenties/early thirties).

*Widow Quin* (a woman of about thirty)

*Shawn Keogh* (her cousin, a young farmer)

*Philly Cullen and Jimmy Farrell* (small farmers)

*Sara Tansey, Susan Brady, and Honor Blake* (village girls)

*A bellman*

*Some peasants.*

If you are interested in “treading the boards”, please give me a ring, Clare Schenker, 022/799 8831 (work), or 079/303 7460 (mobile).

## ***G.I.A. Golf Tournament – 1 October***

35 stalwarts took to the fairways of Royal St. Jean de Gonville Golf Club on 1<sup>st</sup> October in typical west of Ireland weather - a grand soft day, ie. pelting rain! But thanks to our generous sponsors Anglo Irish Bank, Dupont, British Airways, Barclay's Bank, the Irish Mission and our favourite Irish pub in Ferney Voltaire, Paddys, and to our organising team of Mick and Sarah Browne, Jim and Ina Forrest a grand time was had by all.

There was no noticeable "whingeing" (Mick Browne's favourite ground rule!) and an outstanding performance from David Radmall in winning the John McVeigh cup with 41 points. He is a third time winner of the cup and still claims his handicap is honest! Lee Grace was the Ladies' cup winner with an astonishing 45 points. New boy Declan Smyth had the men's low gross score with 26 stableford points - playing to a handicap of 10, so we have a new Irish golfing star amongst us. Said Hadji won the men's longest drive with a Tiger Woods type belt of approx. 280 metres - great stuff.

Of course it is not only the golf that counts on this event. There is a convivial social aspect to the occasion that could be observed by the high level buzz in the restaurant, followed by the prize-giving entertainment. Since 1998 in keeping with the style of John McVeigh, the originator of the competition, we are looking for a successor to take over the reins - any volunteers out there just let the GIA Committee know!



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## ***It was Great Craic Alright!*** ***The first Craic Night, Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2005***

The GIA have launched the Craic Nights on the first Thursday of each month to provide a focal point for the Irish community and friends to socialise together. The first night was a 'board game' night.

The turnout was not great but there were enough people there to make us believe that there is a demand for this type of event. The evening went very well. It was very sociable and the main games to be played were Scrabble, Super Scrabble and Backgammon. Competition was strong with the experts bringing along their dictionaries for insurance. It was a very enjoyable night and I have to admit that I attended to support the night but quite skeptical as to whether board games could entertain the masses for a night. I was pleasantly surprised at how enjoyable it was, both from the games I played and from the sociability and ambiance of the evening.

In discussions with others during the evening, it turns out that a number of the people present are interested in forming a book club. They would hope to meet about once a month. If you would be interested in joining or helping to get the book club started please contact any member of the committee or send an email and we will pass on the details.

The next Craic Night will be on Thursday, 3rd November and it will be a Poker Classic. It will be held in the Romana Restaurant from 8.00pm to 11.30pm. See details at the beginning of the newsletter.

## ***Geneva Literary Aid Society – 7<sup>th</sup> October with Colm Toibin***

The Geneva Literary Aid Society (GLAS) has started a new stream of activity with "The Close Encounter" series featuring famous writers to honour the memory of the late Harold Masterson, a founding member. There was a capacity attendance for the inaugural event featuring the Wexford writer, Colm Toibin, in the American Church Hall on October 7. He spoke about the life and times of the great American writer, Henry James, which provided the basis for his latest novel "The Master" shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2004 and received with critical acclaim worldwide. Colm also fielded a wide variety of questions about his fiction and, as a former journalist, the state of the media. He painted a picture of Henry James as something of a tortured soul who had difficulty coming to terms with his sexuality, and the Irish origins of his family (not something that bothered his famous brother William who was a staunch supporter of Irish independence). All in all a very stimulating evening which was rounded off nicely by the music of Take4. All proceeds were in aid of the Masambo Fund to provide care and treatment to Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers living with HIV/AIDS.

GLAS hopes to announce details shortly of a major coup: the staging in January 2006 of the celebrated Samuel Beckett Trilogy by the Gare St. Lazare players featuring Conor Lovett. " Lovett's astonishing performance...completely original...inhabits the sound and spirit of Beckett's work..." - Fintan O'Toole, The Irish Times. A date will be announced shortly for a close encounter with the renowned war correspondent, Robert Fisk, talking about his new book, The Great War for Civilisation: the Conquest of the Middle East. Contact [info@theglas.org](mailto:info@theglas.org) for further details.

### ***GET YOUR NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL !***

In order to help us reduce our mailing costs for the Newsletter, we would like to be able to send it to you via email. Therefore, please send your email address to [geneva.irish@ireland.com](mailto:geneva.irish@ireland.com) where we will add you to our mailing database for future issues. We do realize that not everybody has email, so for those we don't hear from we shall continue to send you the Newsletter by regular mail.

## ***Geneva Irish retain the Celtic Cup*** ***Geneva Irish 3 Geneva Scots 1***

The match was played in the Vessy Sports Complex at 10.00am on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October. The Irish supporters were out in great numbers and provided great vocal encouragement to the team. Both teams had about 18 players in their panels so Sean O’Faolain took responsibility for managing the substitutions for the Irish.

Ireland started at breakneck pace and almost straight from the kick off Simon Spence, playing at centre forward, blocked down an attempted clearance in mid-field from the Scots centre half, beat three players and ran a further 20 yards before rifling a shot low to the keepers right. It was a great individualist goal and it left the Scots reeling.

The game settled down with the Irish doing most of the attacking and the Scots content to hit on the break with their two very youthful and speedy forwards. There were some close efforts at both ends before a mistake in the Irish defence, inside the box, allowed one of the Scots a clear shot at goal and he made no mistake.

This galvanised the Irish and very shortly we were back in front with a well worked goal. Eoin O’Faolain, the youngest player on the park at 15, received a ball on the right wing. He beat two players before playing a beautifully weighted through ball to Tom Klein. He took the ball in his stride and from the edge of the box he thundered a shot off the underside of the bar and into the back of the net.

The Irish continued to dominate but were saved on a number of occasions when our agile goalkeeper and Captain, Barry Ardifff, had to race off his line to win possession at the feet of inrushing attackers. Fifteen minutes into the second half Ireland got a corner. Simon Spence flighted a great ball towards the penalty spot and Martin Brophy met it full on with a header that flew into the top corner of the net. 3-1 to the Irish.

## ***G.I.A. Membership***

The G.I.A. Committee would like to take this opportunity to say GO RAIBH MAITH AGAT to those of you who have paid the 2005/2006 membership fee. These funds will help greatly in organizing events for you in the year ahead. For those who would still like to become a member, the fee per year is CHF 75 per couple/family, CHF 50 per individual or CHF 25 per student/au pair/retiree. You can use any blank pink bulletin de versement at your post office marking it to pay “The Geneva Irish Association, 1200 Geneve - account no. 12-10220-4”. Membership of the G.I.A. confers a number of benefits, not only the opportunity to participate in a wide range of regular social activities, but also the opportunity to meet with the large Irish community and other nationalities living and working in Geneva and throughout Switzerland. Remember to include your full name and address so we can contact you personally to say thank you.

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## IN MEMORIAM

### Harold Masterson

#### Harold's Blues

Your old bluesmen,  
Johnson, Clapton and the rest,  
Say the darkest hour  
Comes just before the dawn.  
Today the truth is it came just after.

I could not wash, I could not shave  
I could not get out of the attic.  
Then I got on a bus to Merrion Square  
To pick up a photo of you.

The Custom House shivered  
In the Liffey  
Reminding me of Belfast  
That building where Ulster said No  
A word unfamiliar to your good self.

I stopped on the bridge for a sign  
A Manx shearwater  
Ducked and dived  
Gone for ages  
It popped back up somewhere else.

*You're a dweller on the threshold  
Where the poetic champions compose.  
Highway 61 really starts in Lisbellaw.*



**Author's note:** I dedicate this poor excuse of a poem to the memory of Harold Masterson (1947-2005) who left us in August. He grew up on in a roadside cottage in Lisbellaw, Co. Fermanagh and died close to the 40th anniversary of the release of Bob Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited. Dylan, and Harold's much-loved Van Morrison, were among those musicians who provided the soundtrack to his youth and he stuck with them throughout his adult life. In his time Harold was a stalwart member of the Geneva Irish Association committee and was a greatly loved staff member at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He was fluent in Danish but couldn't speak a word of Irish nonetheless he would have appreciated the Blasket lament: Ni fheicimid a leitheid aris ann (we'll not see his like again). He is buried in the cemetery in Petit Saconnex and survived by his wife Kirsten and their three daughters.

Denis McClean.