



Finte na hÉireann-Clans of Ireland

Bromehill House, Kilrush, County Clare V15RT28
Ireland.



Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland



Accredited as a Civil Society Non-Governmental Organisation by The United Nations.

20 June 2024

A chara,

Today, June 20th, is the Summer Solstice of 2024, occurring when the Sun is at the highest point in the sky for those of us in the north. Here in Ireland, up to 16 hours of daylight can be expected. This year has the earliest Summer Solstice since 1796 due to the fact, as I learned from an astrologist, that this is a leap year and the Gregorian calendar is not in perfect alignment with the amount of time it takes for the earth to orbit the sun. Normally, it is on the 21st.

While most of us are familiar with the event surrounding the Winter Solstice at Newgrange, where some of the attendees at this year's Cultural Summit visited in April, the Summer Solstice is also an important day in the calendar for other ancient landmarks in Ireland. On that same trip in April, we visited one of those landmarks, the Hill of Tara, where each year, at the Summer Solstice, people gather to celebrate the Sun and its benefits for crops and nature at the landmark that is recognised as the ancient seat of the high kings of Ireland.

Other locations where people visit to mark the Summer Solstice include the 5,000-year-old Carrowkeel Cairns in County Sligo, the comparatively young 2,000-year-old Drombeg Stone Circle outside Glandore, in County Cork and most familiar to me, the Grange Stone Circle at Lough Gur in County Limerick, which was built around 2200 BC. This morning, the sun rose directly over the largest of Lough Gur's 113 standing stones.

The Summer Solstice is one of eight sacred days in Ireland's Celtic tradition, associated with fertility, nature, new beginnings, and the goddess Áine. June 23rd marks St John's Eve, which is also the date of a Celtic celebration held in honour of Áine, when traditionally bonfires were set alight, so the night of the 23rd is also known as Bonfire Night.

Since the Cultural Summit in April, the Board and committees have been planning and implementing, including the arrangements for the 2025 Annual Cultural Summit. One of the main objectives for the Board is to advance further awareness, particularly among the Clans of Ireland member organisations, of how surnames and kindred are not necessarily synonymous nor, indeed, related. This is likely to be central to the theme of the Summit. I urge you, if you have not done so already, to accurately differentiate your clan from other clans who share a similar surname. I suggest that you look at the registry of Clans to clearly see those clans that are linked to their tuath or place of origin and please do not hesitate to contact the Registrar if you would like further information.

The newly formed Traditional Gaelic Irish Attire Committee in conjunction with the Public Affairs Committee have been developing a strategy to create public awareness and state recognition for traditional Irish dress, as is the case in most countries. You are likely to hear more about this during the months ahead.

I can also say that adjudication is currently underway to decide on the winner from the good entry of excellent essays for the Chiefs and Clans Essay Competition. The winner will be announced during the Summer, and the prize will be presented at the 2025 Cultural Summit.

Is mise le meas,

Gearóid Ó Ceallaigh
Cathaoirleach
