



**Dec.  
2005**

## Sing an Irish Song of Christmas

by Brian Witt

It was an innocent request. Mary Robertson, the music director at Three Holy Women parish in Milwaukee, was looking for Irish Christmas songs, so that all three of the founding ethnic groups would be represented at the Christmas Eve celebration. I suggested "The Wexford Carol", and forgot about the issue until she approached me a few months later about it. Oh, darn those promises of help.

"The Wexford Carol" is one of the oldest extant carols in the European tradition. It has been attributed to the Enniscorthy area of the county, and dates back to the twelfth century. Traditions abound concerning the song. For many years, it was felt that only men should sing it. It was only at the current revival of all things Irish that this attitude changed. Many popular female artists, such as Loreena McKennit, recorded the "Wexford Carol" during the 1990s. "Carúl Loch Garman" is the Irish name of the song.

The song achieved a new popularity because of the work of William Grattan Ford (1859 - 1928), who was organist and musical director at St. Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy. He transcribed the carol from a local singer, and had it published in the Oxford book of carols, putting Enniscorthy into most carol books around the world. The music is probably more familiar than the words, due to its being placed upon almost every Christmas album of "Celtic" music. The first stanza of the song goes as such:

*Good people all, this Christmas-time,*

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*Consider well and bear in mind*

*What our good God for us has done*

*In sending his beloved Son.*

*With Mary holy we should pray*

*To God with love this Christmas day;*

*In Bethlehem upon that morn*

*Jesus Christ was born.*

The Wexford Carol isn't the only Christmas song associated with Ireland.

There is "Once in Royal David's City". It was written in 1848 by poet Cecil Frances Humphreys Alexander, who was born in Co. Wicklow. Cecil wrote about 400 hymns during her lifetime and was the wife of Archbishop William Alexander who was the Anglican primate for Ireland. She's probably most famous for "All Creatures Great and Small." Mrs. Alexander wrote the lyrics in 1848. It was put to the music of "Irby," by Henry John Gauntlett in 1849.

*Once in royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,*

*Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for His bed.*

*Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,*

*And His shelter was a stable,  
And His cradle was a stall;*

*With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Savior Holy.*

*And through all His wondrous childhood  
He would honor and obey,*

*Love and watch the lowly Maiden,  
In whose gentle arms He lay.*

Then there is the "Twelve Days of Christmas". According to legend, the song disguised for Catholics in Ireland the proscribed ceremonies of their faith during the post-Advent season. Each part of the song had a specific meaning to a

particular day. The doubters say that the song was written in France, and has French musical overtones. Others say it was written in one of the many Irish abbeys in that country.

Another carol with ties to the island is “Whilst Shepherds Watch’d Their Flocks by Night”. The words were written by Nahum Tate, a Dubliner who would go on to be the poet Laureate of England in 1692. (Ah, the Irish influence on the English language is timeless.) He was a poet and playwright who wrote happy endings to Shakespearean tragedies.

*Whilst Shepherds Watch’d their flocks by  
night,*

*All seated on the ground,*

*The Angel of the Lord came down,*

*And glory shone around.*

Wexford was the home of Bishop Luke Wadding, Bishop of the Ferns Diocese. The good cleric wrote the song, “Christmas Day is Come”. It is a song that sways and moves, and is fun to sing. Robbie O’Connell recorded a wonderful version a few years back on “An Aengus Christmas”.

*Christmas day is come;  
let’s all prepare for mirth*

*with songs of joy and gladness,  
for Christ is come to earth.*

Another old Irish carol is “Curoo, Curoo”, or the “Carol of the Birds”. It dates back to at least the 18th century, and is sung in both Irish and English.

*Full many a bird did wake and fly*

*Curoo, curoo, curoo*

*Full many a bird did wake and fly*

*To the manger bed with a wandering cry*

*On Christmas day in the morning*

*Curoo, curoo, curoo*

*Curoo, curoo, curoo*

For all of the singing, there was the song of the angels on that Christmas day: Siochain ar Talamh - Peace on Earth.

If you happen to be walking by St. Hedwig’s Church on Christmas Eve, you might be able to hear the sound of the

choir spill over onto Brady Street with the “Wexford Carol” filling the stillness of the night. And if you feel a strange pull towards Ireland, there is a reason.

*Nollaig Shona Duit.* Happy Christmas.

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# Milwaukee Annual Christmas Party and Potluck Dinner

**DECEMBER 1, 2005 • 6:00 p.m.**

Irish Cultural & Heritage Center (2133 W. Wisconsin Ave.)  
Parlors A-B and Smoking Lounge  
Entertainment: Irish Fest Choir, Erin Canon, and Special Guests

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# Shamrock Club Christmas Statewide

The LaCrosse Chapter of the Shamrock Club will have its Christmas party at the Freight House Restaurant, 107 Vine Street, LaCrosse, Wisconsin 54601, on December 14. The chapter’s new web site is [<http://shamrockclublax.org/>].

The North Eastern Chapter Annual Christmas Party will be December 12 (the second Monday in December) at the Holiday Inn in downtown Green Bay.

The Dane County Christmas Party will be December 13, 2005 at the Colosseum Bar.

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# Rock County

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **DECEMBER 13** – Meeting or Christmas Party.

• **JANUARY 17** – Regular Meeting.

As I am writing this during this last week of October, the plans for our Christmas Party have not been finalized so I cannot give you all of the details at this time. When all of the plans are set in place, we will contact each of you by phone as to the date, time and place, and any other details.

May all of you members and families have a Blessed Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year and keep warm.

– **President Tom Kennedy**

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## **Milwaukee President's Message**

December has sneaked up so quickly this year; it means we have been busier than ever. I am looking forward to the beauty of the holidays, and to celebrate once again, the birth of the Christ Child. We have transitioned into sending and receiving Christmas cards here in Milwaukee with the words Nollaig Shona Duit, the Irish words for merry Christmas. For my ancestors who agreed to not use the Irish once they were in Wisconsin, it would be a surprise that we are even aware of the words. This speaks volumes for the interest in this area in learning more and more regarding the Irish culture. Make it a point to learn all you can where possible, our rich culture is always fascinating.

Our wonderful Holiday Folk Fair is now completed, and the Shamrock Club once again did itself proud. Marianne Fisher and Ed Mikush redecorated our Irish cottage with a new thatched roof, and a newly painted interior to upgrade the cultural area. The addition of Irish speaking experts to this area was an asset that attendees enjoyed. The sales booth held beautiful items selected by Noreen Barclay after hours of careful selection and then the setup. Our food booth area under the direction of Kris and Daryl Pluskota was stocked with food selections that any Irish citizen would be proud to behold. None of this would have been possible without the help of the dozens of volunteers from our club that give so selflessly so many times throughout the year. The Kinsella Academy represented us for the children's dance performances, and Glencastle Irish Dancers represented us in the adult dance shows. Thanks to both of these groups for

volunteering for the many hours required. They bring great pride to our heritage.

We have asked members to sign up in advance for the annual Christmas party in December. Our party last year was limited in numbers due to space constraints, and will be this year also. We will once again incorporate Irish Christmas traditions with the candle lighting, carols will be sung with the Irish Fest Choir, and perhaps a visit from the right jolly old elf and his helper. We ask that those attending will bring items for a potluck dinner. Kathy Donovan will give you more information as to the potluck assignments, and is being assisted by Sue Suit and Dawn Fleming in preparing for a festive event. After exploring other venues for December, we have concluded that our meeting will be on the first floor level at the ICHC. This includes a food and beverage area, and seating on this level. We are hopeful you will be able to be there and learn the Irish Christmas traditions and perhaps incorporate one of them at your home this year.

Please begin to think of the people you want to nominate for the 2006 honoree position. The Board will be voting to determine the winners at the January Board meeting, and we will need your nominations by January 25th, 2006. We will be electing a Parade Marshal, Irishman and Irish Rose, to replace this year's winners. There are certainly a number of people who would enjoy the honor, and if you could please give us your reasons why this person should be selected, that would be most helpful.

There are many opportunities to volunteer in 2006. We need persons to help run our post parade party, a general chairperson to oversee the day's festivities, a chair for our honoree dinner, and other events. Come on everyone; let's make the Club's 46th year another memorable one.

See you at the next meeting.

– Julie Smith, President

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## **UWM Theater Performance of “Nickel and Dimed”**



Catherine Barry and David O'Sullivan, two young Dublin actors from the Ballymun community, traveled to Wisconsin in October to take part in the exciting new performance program at UWM Theater Department in cooperation with the Center for Celtic Studies. Their training involves taking part in the upcoming production of "Nickel and Dimed", Tony award winning Joan Holden's adaptation of Barbara Ehrenreich's New York Times bestseller book of the same name.

The play takes a hard, and often hilarious, look at the myth that all it takes to make it in America is a little hard work. Its portrayal of the lives of people working and living on minimum wage is as sharp as it is human and universal.

In January, this production will have its Irish premier in Dublin at the Axis Arts Center in Ballymun. This truly remarkable transatlantic exchange is part of our continuing mission of connecting Wisconsin with Ireland.

You can support this worthwhile project by attending the show. "Nickel and Dimed" will be performed evenings at 7:30 p.m. starting Wednesday, December 7 and runs through December 11 with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Reserve your tickets at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Box office at 414-229-4308

For further information on these events, contact the Center for Celtic Studies at 229-6520.

In addition, Milwaukee Irish Arts will have on December 11 its Sunday series of play readings with the One Act Plays of Seamus O'Brien at the ICHC, at 2 p.m. There will also be a potluck dinner that day. For more information, contact [crbradyweb@yahoo.com](mailto:crbradyweb@yahoo.com).

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# Fall 2005 Hallamor Concert Series

**Concert #5: Tartan Terrors  
Victorian Christmas Extravaganza  
Saturday, December 17, 2005**

The Tartan Terrors return to the ICHC with their Celtic high jinx to portray Christmas in the Victorian Era. This North American premier Celtic comedy group will give us a lesson in what the holidays with all its traditions, were really like. This hilarious presentation should have the audience begging for more of this side-splitting slapstick. These internationally recognized musicians and dancers will delight the audience with their adaptations of Charles Dickens' literary characters and others of that historical time. This Canadian comedy group features two-time World Champion bagpiper, Sean McKeown who has been heard playing Jingle Bells on the bagpipes!

Tickets: \$19 advance, \$21 day of concert

8 pm Concert

Doors open at 6:45 with an opening act by Athas at 7 pm

ICHC

2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue - Milwaukee, WI 53233

414-345-8800

– Gwen Sisk

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## Nominations For Irish Honorees

Nominations for the Irishman of the Year, Irish Rose, and Parade Marshal are now being taken. Elections will take place at the Milwaukee January board meeting. Each nominee must be a club member to be eligible. Take the time to do this and be sure it's here on time. We will start the meeting at 6 p.m. that night, and will accept any written nomination up to January 25. Send nominations to Shamrock Club, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233.

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## Color Guard News and Notes

The Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums started the year out in typical fashion: cold St. Patrick's Day parades, with the New Dublin parade giving us five plus inches of snow. In April the Unit celebrated its 25th year as a group with a dinner/raffle. My thanks to everyone who put hours of work into this event to make it a success. The summer brought the Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums to new parades as well as some traditional ones. The summer was a hot one but the drive to put on a polished show made the work worth it. Speaking of polished, at Irish Fest, the playing for the President of Ireland at the Mass and our performance at The Crossroads were the best we have played and looked. Our season ended in Sister Bay with a picture perfect day and with our friends, ZOR pipes and drums of Madison, we gave the locals a performance I'm sure won't be forgotten.

Speaking of not forgetting, we have said good bye to a few and welcome to a lot more. First, thanks to those who have stepped down: Joe Donovan, Tom Blaha and Richard Stover. Your shoes will be hard to fill.

Welcome to our newbies: Vince and Katie Agnew, Bill and Anna Sherry, Will Conory, Rick Pfeiffer, Neil McCafferty, Rand Harteau, Larry Moore, Beth Stein, Rock Elgin and last but not least Sandra Chamorro. Along with the veterans I'm looking forward to 2006.

Speaking of 2006, we plan on taking our Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums to San Antonio, Texas and with the tireless fund raising that our members have done I think we're going to make it. I almost forgot the parents that give so much of their time to help. Thank you. I'm very proud to be the director of such a fine group.

Thanks,

– **Richard Pfeiffer**

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## Off to Ireland

The teaching staff of Glencastle Irish Dancers, Inc. is proud to announce that they will be sending five of their dancers to

Killarney, Ireland in February, 2006 to compete in the All-Ireland Dance Championships. The dancers representing Glencastle are: Kamala Murphy, Breeanne Glavan-Johnson, Elizabeth Siewert, Morgan Mastrostefano and Molly Sharp. Good luck girls!

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## Shamrock Club Upcoming Speakers

At the January meeting, Jim Vint and members of the Milwaukee Set Dancing community will be demonstrating set dancing. They will be accompanied by live music. This is in advance of the Set Dance weekend in February at the ICHC and Long Wongs.

In February, John Gleeson will be talking about “100 Years of the Abbey Theatre”. The Dublin theatre turned 100 in 2005, and John will entertain with stories on this historic venue that presented ground breaking plays in the advent of the Irish republic.

Meetings are always free and open to the public. These will be at the ICHC, and start at 7 pm.

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## Celtic Women: First Friday Lectures

**Dec. 2, 2005**

**Topic:** Celtic Women Christmas Social” with Sreangan Binn, Bowed Psalteries.

**Speaker:** Celtic men to entertain us. John Gleeson (Irish), Eamonn O’Neill (Irish), Ian Day (Scottish).

Celtic women crafters will be with us to display their creations – just what you are looking for in an unusual Christmas gift. And for treats, everyone please bring a little something from your own Christmas largess. The Celtic men will tell Celtic stories and sing Celtic songs. Sreangan Binn will once again

honor our special event with their holiday melodies. What could be nicer?

Lectures are held from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at the ICHC, 2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee. Admission is \$5 for all. Everyone is welcome including men and non-members as well as Celtic Women members. Tea and biscuits are served. Please join us for a delightful few hours of Celtic education and entertainment. You may call the ICHC at 414-345-8800 for more information.

Parking Note: Please observe the parking areas surrounding the ICHC and follow the posted signs designating the lots where parking is allowed for the ICHC. Thank you.

– **Jean Bills**

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## **RTE Irish News**

### **Johnson suspended as rules change**

Australia's International Rules co-captain Chris Johnson has been suspended for the next five clashes against Ireland after pleading guilty to striking Philip Jordan and Mattie Forde during the second Test at Telstra Dome last month.

Despite a heartfelt apology by the Brisbane Lions defender, Johnson won't be eligible to play against Ireland again until the second test of the 2008 series. The tribunal hearing took place via a telephone link-up featuring officials from the AFL and the GAA this morning.

“You don't know how disappointed I am in myself at what happened,” said Johnson in a statement released by the Lions. “To Philip Jordan and Mattie Forde, I apologise sincerely to you guys. I'd like to say to them that I can't believe it was me doing those things – it's not the way that I play the game.

“I really would love to have the chance to play against them again and prove to them that it was an isolated, temporary lapse, and not one of my character traits.”

At the same time as the Tribunal reached its verdict, the committee that governs the playing conditions of the International Rules series announced a new rule to take effect when a player receives a red card and is sent off for the remainder of the game.

From next year, the opposing team will be awarded a penalty kick immediately after the incident, regardless of where the sending off incident takes place on the field. In addition, the team whose player was sent off will not be able to bring a replacement player on for another 20 minutes.

### **'Intense' talks on barrier free tolling**

Motorists have 'hardly' got a good deal from the West Link Toll bridge, Comptroller and Auditor General John Purcell told the Public Accounts Committee today. He said they were paying more than initially envisaged and were getting a lower level of service. But he said that in monetary terms the State did get a good deal.

Meanwhile, the Public Accounts Committee also heard that intense discussions are underway with NTR to provide barrier free tolling at Dublin's West Link bridge. The Secretary General at the Department of Transport, Julie O'Neill, said the aim is to get this done as soon as possible. Ms O'Neill said underpayments to the state from NTR have been resolved and the last part of this will see the company paying back €136,000 in April 2006. The C&AG said there were underpayments of around €2m in 2003 and 2004.

Ms O'Neill also said that some 2,200 trucks will go through the West Link Toll Bridge every day once the Dublin Port Tunnel opens. This is the equivalent of the annual traffic increase at the bridge, but it will happen in one day, she added.

### **Inflation remains at two year high of 3%**

New figures from the Central Statistics Office reveal that the annual rate of inflation remained at a two year high of 3% in October. Inflation had jumped from 2.3% in August to 3% in September, mainly due to higher fuel costs. The CSO says that consumer prices in October increased by 0.1% in the month. This was the same as the rise recorded in October 2004 and as a result, the annual rate of inflation remained at 3%.

The CSO said that the annual rate of inflation for goods was 1.7% in October, while the corresponding rate for services was 4.1%. Last month education costs rose by 2.1% with increased third level tuition fees as well as higher fees for private secondary education. Costs for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels increased by 1.7% with hikes in natural gas and home heating oil and higher average mortgage interest repayments.

Clothing and footwear prices fell by 1.3% while transport

costs decreased by 0.8% with lower prices for petrol and a fall in air fares.

The CSO said that the EU Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices was unchanged in the month, compared to an increase of 0.1% in October 2004. The annual rate of inflation, as measure by HICP, fell from 2.8% in September to 2.7% in October.

Today's figures also reveal that prices for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels jumped by 11.9% in the 12 months from October 2004 to October 2005. Transport costs rose by 6.1%, while health prices increased by 6.2%. Education costs were up 4.8%, while prices in restaurants and hotels increased by 3.1%.

There was a 3% decrease in the cost of clothing and footwear, while prices for furnishings, household equipment and routine household maintenance rose by 1.1%.

Bloxham economist Alan McQuaid said there were signs that

the effects of higher energy costs were starting to feed through, while the weaker euro could also lead to a pick-up in import prices in the coming months.

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### **St. Patrick's Help Fund**

St. Patrick's Help Fund is in desperate need of non-perishable foods. Please place in container at each meeting. However, donations can be brought to the ICHC any time during the week. Questions? Call Katy Voss (414) 352-6479.

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### **New Members**

NOTE: Please send your dues to your Membership Chairperson in your chapter. All names and addresses are listed in Emerald Reflections.

Milwaukee – Neil McCafferty; Marilyn McKnight; Jean C. Peterson.

South Central – Robert and Eunice Burke; David and Sally Churchill; Fay and Kenneth Flanigan; Ann Lehr and Family; Douglas and Patricia Moklum.

#### **Membership Report Milwaukee Chapter:**

- Sept.: 35 memberships due for renewal, 25 paid, 10 due.
- Oct.: 36 memberships up for renewal, 21 paid, 15 due.
- Nov.: 27 memberships up for renewal, 10 paid, 17 due.

When paying dues, please make all checks payable to the Shamrock Club. Some have been coming in my name. Thank you.

– **Tom Smith**

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