



Dec. 2006

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Irish Christmas Traditions

The Irish have a rich history of traditions concerning Christmas and meals. Come along and join us as we partake in many of the rituals and meals of an Irish Christmas. Look in on some of the traditions of Nollaig, the Irish Christmas.

On The Twelves Days Of Christmas, We Celebrate The Season

Because it is still quite a religious country – Catholicism being the most prevalent – Irish traditions reflect the religiosity of the country more than the increasingly secular customs of North America. The popular Christmas carol, Twelve Days of Christmas, is a remnant from the time when Catholicism was suppressed. The gifts listed in the song are hidden references to Catholic dogma and ritual.

The Candle In The Window To Guide Mary And Joseph

The lighting of candles in Ireland also has a religious significance. Candles in the windows of homes would signify symbolic hospitality for Mary and Joseph. The candle was a way of saying there was room for Jesus' parents in these homes even if there was none in Bethlehem. Some people even set extra places at their tables in preparation for unexpected visitors.

Christmas Dinner

Christmas dinners in Ireland usually consist of the standard fare; turkey, goose, ham, stuffing, cranberry sauce, etc. Among the more traditional Irish elements are spiced beef (spiced over several days, cooked, and then pressed) which can be served either hot or cold. The traditional dessert is usually composed of mince pies, Christmas pudding, and brandy or rum sauce.

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St. Stephen's And Boxing Day – Oh, Here Come The Gifts

Gift giving in Ireland, as well as the rest of the British Isles, centers on December 26, St. Stephen's Day. Small gifts were traditionally given prior to Christmas, usually of the cash variety, to the milkman and mailman. Long ago, this was done on St. Stephen's day, also known as Boxing Day (the day after Christmas).

The Wren Boys And The King Of The Birds

Christmas in Ireland cannot be discussed without reference to the Wren Boys on St. Stephen's Day. This practice of antiquity predates St. Patrick. In ancient times, a wren was beaten out of the bushes and its body hung on a holly bush, or displayed in a lined box similar to a coffin. The killing of a bird is no longer tolerated, as the wren was brought close to extinction in some areas of Cork and Kerry, but the door to door visits continue. Participants dress up in homemade costumes reminiscent of North American Halloween. The song they yell from house to house is called: The wren, the wren, the king of all birds

People treat the Wren Boys to beer, whiskey and foodstuffs. Young people in the visited homes are asked to join the assembly.

The official end of the Christmas season in Ireland occurs on January 6th, the Feast of Epiphany (also known as "Little Christmas"). As the name suggests, there is a feast on that day and it's also that day that the Christmas decorations are taken down.

As you may have noticed, food is an important part of the season. To celebrate Christmas, Irish style, try a few of these recipes to enhance the Christmas spirit:

Irish Christmas Cake

- Citron 1 lb.
- Candied orange and lemon peel, combined, ½ lb.
- Dates, ½ lb.
- Glace cherries, ½ lb.
- Raisins, 3 ¾ Cup.
- Currants, 2 ¾ Cup.
- Almonds and pecans, combined, coarsely chopped, 1 lb.
- Brandy, ¾ Cup
- Brown sugar, 1 lb.
- Butter, softened, 1 lb.
- Egg yolks, beaten until thick, 15
- All-purpose flour, sifted, 4 Cups
- Cinnamon, 1 Tbsp.
- Cloves, 1 Tbsp.
- Allspice, 1 Tbsp.

- Nutmeg, 1 Tbsp.
- Mace, 1 ½ tsp.
- Egg whites, beaten until stiff, 15

Chop the citron, orange and lemon peels, dates and cherries. (Reserve a few cherry halves for decoration.) Add the raisins, currants, almonds, and pecans. (Reserve a few nut halves for decoration.) Pour on the brandy and let the fruits marinate while preparing the rest of the ingredients. Cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Add the beaten egg yolks gradually, beating constantly. reserve 1 cup of the flour and sift the remaining 3 cups with the spices. Add the sifted ingredients gradually to the butter mixture, beating well after each addition. Fold in the egg whites carefully. Sprinkle the fruits with the reserved 1 cup of flour and mix well. Fold the fruits into the batter. Oil and line a 12-inch springform pan with waxed paper. Place batter in pan and bake in 300° F. oven with pans of hot water in bottom of the oven, for 2 ½ hours. Cool the cake and wrap in cheesecloth that has been soaked in brandy. Place in airtight container and store until ready to use. Every 3 weeks, re-dip the cheesecloth wrapper in brandy. Before decorating, glaze the top and sides of the cake with either apricot jam, thinned with a little water or red currant jelly. This will help the marzipan to adhere to the cake sides.

Traditional Irish Bacon And Cabbage

- 1 Traditional Slab Bacon (1 ¼ - 2lb)
- ½ green cabbage and ½ white cabbage
- 8 potatoes (peeled)
- Salt and pepper

Remove slab bacon from plastic bag. Cover with cold water. Bring to boil and drain. Cover with fresh cold water. Bring to boil and then simmer for 25 minutes per 1lb plus 25 minutes over. Remove outer leaves of cabbage. Cut in half, add to the saucepan and simmer for the last 20 minutes. Remove bacon to chopping board and carve into thin slices. Drain cabbage, season with salt & pepper, chop and add a knob of butter. Serve the bacon with the cabbage and boiled potatoes and parsley sauce.

And again *Nollaig Shona Duit* - Happy Christmas!

- **Brian Witt**

Milwaukee

President's Message

December is here, and with all the wintry weather in October and November, it feels like it has been here for a while. And with all the Christmas decorations up since August, one can feel as though they are living in an eternal yule season. As Christmas in Ireland brought a time to clean the house from top to bottom, do all sorts of special baking, and the once a year meals that were unique to the season, it made the Irish experience a special one.

Thanks to all who worked so hard at the recent Folk Fair. You are a special group of people, and your volunteer spirit is greatly appreciated. The face of the Irish was represented in good form. This is our biggest fund raiser each year, so know that you have been able to further the good name of the Irish because of your work.

Thanks also to the Irish Fest School of Music for performing at our November meeting. It is good to see new players keeping the music alive. Julie Smith was the person who coordinated the decorating at the Irish Fest Center.

Heading to March, our March 10 events include the Mass at St Patrick's Church, the Parade, and the Post Parade Party. We will have the Archbishop, Timothy Dolan, celebrating our Mass. He will also be a part of the Parade. In addition, Mike O'Leary, one of our parade directors, has confirmed that a number of New York City police officers will be here for four days in March, and will be a part of our parade. Things are shaping up. Get those marching shoes out and polished. Raffle tickets will be printed soon, and will be distributed in ways we have yet to figure out as of now.

There are lots of Christmas celebrations going on this month. The ICHC Concert season will be featuring The Crossing in a special seasonal show. And our Christmas party is going to be December 7 at the ICHC. We need reservations, so we can know how much food to order. In addition, bring along a special dish of your own, salads or veggies from A-M and desserts from N-Z.

We had some problems with the Reflections getting printed and mailed for November's issue. We are working on trying to fix that problem.

We have a very strong board. They are all opinionated, and will let me know what their objections are, in no short order. That is wonderful, and we have a good system of checks and balances. With that in mind, and even though we are months away from elections, think about running for an office. We need good people, fresh ideas and historic perspective. So, with a good cross cut of

representation, this organization will stay strong and grow stronger. Nominations start in March, and the elections are in May.

And speaking of nominations, we are looking for nominations for Irishman, Irish Rose and Parade Marshal. The nominees must be members in good standing, first order of good standing is they must have their dues paid. We will be voting on those choices at the January board meeting.

Some people have said that they wish they could do more, come to more meetings, and just be more involved. We all know we have a finite amount of hours in a month. If you can't be eternally involved, we can always use your help in other ways. One person helps out on the budget hearings each year. Others sell our tickets for Folk Fair. Your special talents may not be obvious to you at first, but if you have ideas on how to improve the organization, we are looking for them.

Congratulations to Tom Fisher, one of our 2006 Scholarship winners. He did a presentation about how he used his award, at the Oideas Gael school in Co Donegal. Thank you for that report.

And speaking of members, our membership has risen in the past number of months. Welcome again to all of you. If you have a hard time looking for that really nice present, give the gift of Shamrock Club membership. It isn't a tie, a Tiffany ring or a Ferrari, but it has a truly rich history and a great future.

Have a good December, and have a great Christmas. *Nollaig Shona Duit.*

– **Brian Witt**

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Shamrock Club of Rock County

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **DECEMBER 12**– Christmas Party at the Janesville Senior Center, 6 p.m.
- **JANUARY** – There will not be a meeting. We checked the long range forecast and the weather is very unpredictable for the third Tuesday in January. That is the best excuse I can think of right now.

Our Christmas Party will be a Potluck. The Club will furnish the meat, potatoes, rolls and coffee. If you do not want coffee, you

can bring your own non-alcoholic beverage. As for the Potluck, everyone is to bring a salad or a dessert.

Bring a wrapped gift for the White Elephant gift exchange.

If you did not get to the October meeting, please try to get to our Christmas Party and meet our new officers and show your support. You might be surprised at how much fun it is to get involved in our club.

Scribe,

– **Tom Kennedy**

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Christmas Party 2006

Our annual Christmas Party will take place on Thursday, December 7, 2006 at the ICHC. We will again be using all of the lower level of the building. The Shamrock Club will be providing meat as well as beverages. We are asking members whose last names start with A to N to bring a side dish, of vegetables or salads, and from O to Z to bring desserts.

We will again have entertainment from Santa Claus and the Irish Fest Choir. Reservations will be needed, so please sign up in advance. For reservations and information, call Kathy Donovan at (414) 647-1944.

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Kinsella Christmas

“A Kinsella Christmas” will be held on Friday, December 22, 2006 at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center. Proceeds will benefit the ICHC as well as the Kinsella dancers who will be competing at the World Championships in Scotland over Easter.

This will be a variety show of sorts with singing, story telling, and Irish dancing set to a Christmas theme. There will be a raffle and bake sale as well. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Call (414) 529-2648 for ticket information.

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Celtic Women First Fridays

DATE: Dec. 1, 2006

TOPIC: “Celtic Women Christmas Social”

MUSIC: Bantry Bay, Bonnee Beth

This evening is devoted to Celtic Christmas delights including music by Milwaukee’s own Bantry Bay, consisting of Patrick Daspit, Amy Otis Wilborn and Bonnee Beth. We will be entertained as they perform lively traditional dance tunes, beautiful ballads, fun songs and other silliness. Their repertoire includes Celtic melodies from Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and North America. Also on hand are great original craft tables with hand-made items for your shopping, plus cookies, candy and other treats brought by you.

DATE: Jan. 5, 2007

TOPIC: “John M. Synge – That Inquiring Man of the Aran Islands”

SPEAKER: Charlotte Brady

Charlotte will recap the writing of *Playboy of the Western World* and a bit of its performance history at the Abbey Theatre and elsewhere. Then we will act out a scene from this classic play. Join Charlotte in the third year of her entertaining and instructive presentations. (Back by popular demand).

All lectures are held from 5:30–7 p.m. at the ICHC. Admission is \$5 for all. Everyone welcome including men. 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.

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Nominations For Irish Honorees

Nominations for the Irishman of the Year, Irish Rose, and Parade Marshal will be taken in December and January. Nominations must

be in by the January board meeting. Each nominee must be a club member to be eligible. Send nominations to Shamrock Club, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233.

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Color Guard News and Notes

Nollaig shona agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh.

Your homework for this month is to translate that Irish Gaelic phrase. I'll even give you a hint – it has something to do with the impending holiday.

Hi Everyone. The season of giving is here. Have you chosen a charity to give to or a retirement home to visit? Make a special trip to drop a toy for a child, a meal for the homeless, or a donation to honor a loved one, animal or human, that has passed from your life in 2006? The band is doing its part to donate. We are collecting gently used or new articles of warm clothing (hats, coats, boots, scarves, etc.) for our annual drive. Stop by on practice Tuesdays at the ICHC before December 12th to donate to a great cause. If you can't make Tuesdays, give Rich Pfeiffer a jingle for other arrangements. Anything you can do to help is always greatly appreciated.

Speaking of fundraisers, the band will be selling popcorn, fudge and the like this season between now and I believe January. See your friendly neighborhood club member for more details. I've heard the popcorn is to die for.

As for me, I've been busy practicing Auld Lang Syne for my New Year's Eve gig. Last year, I played in front of over 250 people along with the band 5 Card Studs at the stroke of midnight at Café Lulu. As I struck in the drones, one gent got down on one knee, and pulled out a sparkler for his girlfriend. What a night for her – to be serenaded by bagpipes, The 5 Card Studs, engaged all in a matter of minutes. I'm surprised she didn't faint! This year promises to be just as fun. Look out for a few of us playing out in force this season. No hints, but just because our season's over, doesn't mean we stop playing!

The band has nominated its 2007 officers. Here are the standings, and congrats to everyone.

- Karen Nielson and Mart Rosewicz – Color Guard Sergeants
- Del Cannon and Bill Sherry – Color Guard Corporals

- Rick Pfeiffer – Drum Sergeant
- Mike Cornel – Pipe Sergeant and Quartermaster
- Dan McCormack – Pipe Sergeant
- Holly Pfeiffer and Noel Tylla – Pipe Corporals.

Last month, I forgot to mention one member's important contribution. Will Conroy, a first year piper, represented our group at the Koman Race for the Cure, where he played Chariots of Fire as the runners crossed the Mason St. Bridge. This performance, I hear, was greatly appreciated by athletes and spectators alike. THANKS WILL and sorry I forgot to mention it sooner.

One more side note, Del Cannon's daughter, I've heard, is one talented little lass. Harp player, champion dancer extraordinaire, and all around pretty girl. He has something to be so very proud of in her. Congrats, Erin. When you have some spare time, we would love to have you in the band!

Ok, one more Gaelic phrase and I'm outta' here. Raithe o Nollaig go Feile Phadraig.

Just a gentle Gaelic reminder that it's only three months between Christmas and St. Patrick's Day. Or in other words, 12 short weeks, or 84 short days, or if you must, some 2700 hours til the Green Season.

Have a safe, joyous and happy Holiday Season. Until 2007, my friends.

– Noel Tylla
4th year piper (yup, 4 years this month)

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Hallamor Concert #4

The Crossing

Sat., December 16, 2006

The Crossing has been crafting music to warm your heart and to get your feet moving for over twenty years. With their multiple instruments and intricate arrangements of traditional and original Celtic tunes, The Crossing has been received enthusiastically by Celts on both sides of the Atlantic. Their lyrics show their love for

the Creator of the Celtic peoples. They creatively communicate a message of hope amid the turmoil of today's world. Their program will have a Christmas flavor.

Members of The Crossing are: Tony Krogh on highland and uilleann pipes, guitar, bouzouki, didgeridoo, whistle, bodhran and lead vocals. Jennifer Ingerson on fiddle, vocals. Mike Baznik on guitar, bouzouki, bodhran, whistle, keyboard, dulcimer, vocals. Mark Hall on flute, whistle, harp, dulcimer, bodhran, vocals. Hilde Bialach on cello, keyboards, vocals.

Irish Cultural and Heritage Center

2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI

414-345-8800

Tickets: Advance/reserved \$15, \$17 Day of Concert

Opening act: 7 p.m.

– **Gwen Sisk**

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State Chapter News

NEW DUBLIN

St. Patrick's Festivities – March 2007 (Subject to change)

- Monday, March 12 – Leprechauns change the name of the town the New Dublin.
- Tuesday, March 13 – Hooligan Day.
- Wednesday, March 14 – Irish Caroling at St. Joseph's Residence and Franklin Park apartments. A great way to learn all the traditional Irish sing-a-longs.
- Thursday, March 15 – Irish Entertainment at New London Sr. High School auditorium 7 p.m. Talented artists of New Dublin present an evening of Irish entertainment featuring songs, dances and humor of Ireland. Introduction of the 2007 Irish Man and Irish Rose; Grand Marshal, and the Irish Lad & Lassie. Great family entertainment. Public invited. Free admission, donations appreciated.
- Friday, March 16 – 8 p.m Finnegan's wake service begins at Pup's Irish Pub two miles west of New Dublin on Hwy 54 and

proceeds to other local establishments. 7 p.m. Irish Ceili (kay-lee) at Crystal Falls – a traditional gathering of friends and family in celebration of music and dance. The ceili band and caller to be announced. Public welcome. Free admission.

- Saturday, March 17 – St. Patrick’s Day! – The Grand Parade and Irish Fest 11 a.m – 6 p.m. Irish Fest under the Big Top at Festival Foods Parking lot, Downtown New Dublin. HUGE heated tent featuring Irish food, beverages, entertainment and market booths. All-day family event. Our bands will be announced at a later date. Admission \$5 for all day. 6 p.m Raffle drawing. 1 p.m. St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Downtown New Dublin. Wisconsin’s largest St. Patrick’s Day parade with marching and bagpipe bands, clan and business floats. Over 100 units. Prizes awarded.

All events are sponsored by the Shamrock Club of New Dublin with the help of many fine businesses and individuals from New Dublin and the surrounding area. Information about any of the events listed may be obtained by calling any of the following Irish Hot Lines or by email: (920) 982-3891 – General Information and maybe a little bit of Blarney. (920) 982-1587 – Friday Ceili. (920) 982-5892 – Irish Fest Booths and Entertainment.

DANE COUNTY

The Dane County Christmas Party will take place on December 12 at 6 p.m. at the Coliseum Bar, 222 E. Olin Ave. Madison.

NE WISCONSIN

The Green Bay chapter has been busy lately, with a full fall, and a lot of activities planned into spring. The Shamrock Club of Green Bay and NE Wisconsin will have its Christmas party on December 11 at the Downtown Holiday Inn in Green Bay at 7 p.m. Upcoming events include: January 15 – Shamrock Club meeting (tentative program on Waterford Crystal); May 5 – Anthony Kearns, West High Auditorium, Green Bay.

Club members in attendance at the September 17th meeting voted for the club to send a donation to St. Pat’s Food Pantry in the amount of \$500. St. Pat’s Pantry has seen a 25% increase in clientele and fewer donations overall. They serve around 500 families a year.

Club members are encouraged to bring canned goods, personal hygiene items and cleaning supplies to meetings. Items such as: canned vegetables and fruit, peanut butter, cereal, soups, canned tuna, pasta sauce, and Mac and cheese are desperately needed. Please be generous.

The Shamrock Club Library is located at Trulley’s Irish Gifts, 124

N. Broadway (2nd floor), DePere ((920) 330-0103). Please visit the library and browse through and borrow from the large collection of books, tapes and magazines. If you are seeing the collection for the first time, you will be surprised at the extent of it. Also available at Trulley's are copies of club member Mick Gleason's novel, *The Lord be with You*, for a reasonable price.

LA CROSSE

The La Crosse Chapter will have its Christmas party on December 6 at the Freight House Restaurant, 107 Vine Street, LaCrosse, Wisconsin 54601. There will be a social with music by Barry Byrne from 5:30 to 7 p.m., and dinner at 7 p.m.

On December 18, the Shamrock Club hosts Rotary Lights. We need volunteers. Call Sharon Candahl at (715) 784-7101. Our first meeting of 2007 will be January 17, at the VFW. It will be a pot luck dinner.

LAFAYETTE

Raffle tickets are in the works! We are hoping to have them ready to go in January. It was decided after much debate, that we will be holding our Christmas party/meeting on December 10 at 1 p.m. at the Wheel Inn, in Shullsburg, WI. This will be each individual's expense and family and friends are welcome to join.

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Currency Rates

If you are traveling to Ireland, here are current exchange rates: The Euro is going at 1.27 to the dollar, or about 78 cents per Euro. The British pound, which you need in Northern Ireland, is at 1.90 to the dollar, or 52 cents per dollar. Rates fluctuate, so they may be lower or higher during your trip.

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Young Members

Colleen Jaskulski has been elected student council vice-president of St. Mary's School in Hales Corners.

Maeve Smith recently won all first places in the East Bay Feis in Oakland, CA. Maeve is the daughter of members Tom and Kathleen Smith.

Congratulations to Glencastle Irish Dancers on moving to their state-of-the art dance studio in West Allis. For further information, go to [www.glencastleirishdancers.com].

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Sunshine Club

Richard Stover's father has passed away. The father of John Kendellen passed away in late November.

Ralph McCarthy recently had surgery.

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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: Michael and Dora Brady (referred by Ralph McCarthy); John and Mary Fisher (referred by Julie Smith); Jason Heiden (referred by Holy Lynn Pfeiffer); Emmitt Jordan (referred

by Irish Fest); Clare O'Brien and Steve Cody (referred by Mike McAdams).

– **Tom Smith**

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