



**Jan.  
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## **C S Lewis and the Chronicles of County Down?**

*by Brian Witt*

The recent release of the movie based on C S Lewis's book, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* has brought renewed interest in the life of the Belfast born author. However, a recent report out of Belfast says that the true home for the *Chronicles of Narnia* may have been County Down.

Clive S. "Jack" Lewis was born in Belfast on November 29, 1898. He was the second son of Albert Lewis, a lawyer, and Flora Hamilton Lewis. His older brother, Warren Hamilton Lewis, who was known as Warnie, had been born three years earlier in 1895. At the age of ten, his mother died, and he was sent to boarding school in England, a place he hated for its dour headmaster and bleak social aspects. When the school closed two years later, he returned to Ireland. After a year at home, he was to return to England to live for what was to be the rest of his life. However, he would return to Ireland each year for his summers.

He spent time in the trenches during World War One, an experience that soured him on war. At Oxford, where he was both a student and a lecturer for almost 40 years, he became an avowed atheist, which more than likely caused a bit of discomfort in the Lewis home, as his grandfather had been a priest in the Church of Ireland. However, over the years he found himself returning to Christianity. Much of this was after long conversations with his friend, J R R Tolkien, a convert to

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Catholicism. The sense of religion and mystery was to remain a central part of his books, both his serious scholarship and the fantasy world of Narnia.

The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe describes a war in a frozen fantasy land between the forces of darkness and the forces of good. Lewis completed his story in 1948. In it, four children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—go to stay with a reclusive old professor in a mysterious country house. While playing a game, Lucy hides in a wardrobe and discovers that it leads to a magical world called Narnia. This land, which is inhabited by talking animals, is ruled by the lion Aslan, a good and powerful king. Narnia, however, had come under the spell of the evil White Witch, who had caused it to be always winter but never Christmas there.

According to Ann-Marie Imbornoni on Factmonster.com, Lewis had first had the idea to write a book for children in 1939. At this time, many children were evacuated from England's major cities and sent to live in the countryside because of the threat of bombing during World War II. Lewis had opened his home, The Kilns, to some of these young refugees, one of whom had been fascinated by a wardrobe there, imagining another way out of it through the other side. This image struck a chord with Lewis, who had first read about a magic wardrobe as a boy, in *The Aunt and Anabel* by Edith Nesbit.

The ties to Down were also there. Northern Ireland always remained in his heart, and he would return for annual holidays. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis wrote: "Heaven is Oxford lifted and placed in the middle of the County Down." When he was seven years old, his family moved to Little Lea, a detached Edwardian home which still stands on Circular Road in east Belfast.

According to a BBC Ulster radio account, Tony Wilson, Chairman of the CS Lewis Association of Ireland, said this was the home of the wardrobe where the author would hide and dream up his make-believe worlds. "I'm sure this set off the idea in the book of opening the wardrobe and the young boy getting inside," he said. "Once you shut yourself inside a wardrobe, you can imagine anything."

Lewis wrote in his autobiography that he lived "entirely in (his) imagination" during his time there. "I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also of endless books."

But what about the lion? The author's grandfather was a minister about a mile down the road at St. Mark's Church in the city. At the old rectory, an ornate handle in the shape of a lion's head can be found on the door, at about head-height for a child aged five or six.

And according to Warren Lewis, bike rides to Stormont would yield views of the distant Mourne mountains and Strangford Lough in County Down, and there Jack would say they looked like a fantasy world. From the crest of the Holywood Hills, the boys would see the Mourne Mountains in the distance. Warren believed that his brother drew greatly on the County Down landscape, and the Mourne Mountains in particular, in creating the magical country of Narnia.

The release of the film brought about a series of events in Belfast centering around the man, the film, and the connections with the area. The Irish film premiere of the movie was held in Belfast on December 8, with a special black tie dinner. A special walking trail highlighted the author's Belfast connections, with guided bus tours during the festival itself, and The Seamus Heaney Centre of Poetry organized a CS Lewis Symposium at Queen's University, Belfast. Another Belfast-QUB connection was Liam Neeson, a graduate of the university who was the voice of Aslan.

C S Lewis died in 1963, three years after his wife, Joy. As a young man he wrote, "None loves the hills of Down better than I." As a middle aged man, he immortalized the countryside he loved in his books. A half century afterwards, that love will be experienced again by millions.

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# Rock County

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- JANUARY 17 – Regular Meeting.
- FEBRUARY 21 – Chili Mix (6 p.m.) and Meeting (7 p.m.)

Come and join us and participate in our meeting on January 17 at 7 p.m. Let us know what you would like to see our club do and if you have any ideas. Bring those ideas to this meeting.

At our January meeting we will have a Shamrock Club Sing-A-Long after the business meeting. Everyone enjoys the sing-

a-longs that we have had at our Club picnics the last two years, so we thought we would try one at a meeting. It is up to each one of you to keep warm and don't catch a cold as we want every one of you to be in very good voice that evening.

At our November meeting we were entertained by the Scholastic Four, a barbershop quartet made up of four absent-minded professors. It was interesting as they explained barbershop singing and they were very entertaining.

Keep in mind, at our February meeting we will have the Shamrock Club version of the Antique Road Show. What are you going to bring to show and tell about?

– **President Tom Kennedy**

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### **Dane County**

The Dane County Shamrock Club meets the second Tuesday at the Coliseum Bar on Olin Avenue in Madison. The executive board meets at 5:30 p.m. with the general membership meeting following at 6:30.

In December, we held our annual Christmas Party with entertainment, a raffle, social hour and dinner, followed by cookies provided by our members. Left over cookies were taken to the homeless shelters in Madison so we could help spread the Christmas spirit.

In the past couple of months, we had a professor from the UW talk on the Muslim –Irish ties, a film on travel in Ireland and our vice-president, Kay Sweeney, told of her trip with the International Forgiveness Project in Belfast.

Our next meeting will be in February, as we don't hold one in January due to Wisconsin's winter and the road conditions. We are hoping to have instructions on playing the penny whistle and the bodhrans. We also meet for a Lunch Bunch at various restaurants that feature Irish menus and are advertisers in our newsletter. We welcome everyone to any of our meetings. Our web site can be found at [<http://communities.madison.com/communities/shamrock/>].

– **Margaret Rupert**

## **South Central Shamrock Club**

A board meeting was held on October 9, 2005, to set up the schedule for the coming year of our club.

A general meeting was held on November 13, with about 25 members in attendance.

Dana Horkan-Gant reported on Butterfest Parade, she will work on details for the Club for the 2006 parade.

Jack Gavin talked about increasing our membership. Dana and Jackie Harris have made up a list of members, they will be sending letters inviting people to join.

Committees were set up for the Irishman and Irish Rose.

Bill and Pat Wilde will once again be on the committee for the St. Pat's Party.

December 11, 2005 was the date of our Christmas Party, which was held at the Reedsburg Country Club with a large group in attendance.

– **Mary E. Stieve, Reporter**

## **Milwaukee President's Message**

Greetings and blessings to each of you in the New Year. The year 2006 will be another exciting eventful year in which we can all look forward to more memorable events. Our Past President Joe Hughes suggested a new event for this year that adds to the fun of the month of January. We will host an Honoree Debut on Friday, January 27 at the ICHC. We have invited the Irish Consul General Charles Sheehan to lend even more formality to the night. The board meets the night before to elect the 2006 Irishman, Irish Rose, and Parade Marshal. This event will reveal the winners, and introduce them to the community. If you have a candidate, please send your nomination in before January 25. Any of you who may be selected will have to get haircuts and look good just in case, due to the short lead-time. There will be a \$10 charge per person for the evening to offset expenses. The price includes

free beer, soda, and snacks. We will start the ceremony at 5:30 p.m. and will end at 8 p.m. Please add this new event to your social calendar, and as always we implore you to show your support of the Honorees by assisting with the event or by your presence.

January will fly by and with only two months until our parade on March 11. The Parade Committee has worked diligently to ensure success and to pass the pride of our heritage along to all the attendees. We have had the pleasure of working again with the great staff of the Westtown Association. One new feature in the parade this year will be a car with the winning bidder from the Holiday Folk Fair riding in the parade, along with four tickets to our Post Parade Party. Each ethnic group was asked to provide something from their group for a silent auction. The monies raised will be donated to the Organs for Life group. This appears to be a win-win situation for all concerned. I was pleased to know the Shamrock Club's parade was one of the most coveted items in the silent auction.

Our annual Christmas meeting held on December 1st was well attended and pleasurable. If you were there, there's no need to tell you we were of good cheer, and the harp music of Erin Canon and singing of the Irish Fest Choir added to the evening. My thanks to Kris Pluskota, Sue Suit, Kathy Donovan, Dawn and Peter Fleming, Ed and Betty Mikush, Mary McAndrews, and Gail and Tom McAleese for the work they did making it all work. Our very own Santa and his helper brought smiles to one and all. Thanks to the potluck dinner and all the great food it brought in, we had much to be thankful for.

See you at the next meeting.

– **Julie Smith, President**

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## **The 2006 Spring Concert Series**

The diverse and exciting Spring Concert Series for the ICHC is now set. There will be four concerts beginning with Ceili Rain on Friday, February, 17, 2006. Ceili Rain is a Celtic music group with a Christian theme running through their music. On St. Patrick's Day, we will enjoy The Karan Casey Band. The former lead singer of Solas delights audiences with her mesmerizing soprano voice. On the 15 of April, Luka

Bloom, younger brother of Christy Moore, will entertain. He is a singer-songwriter who possess a remarkable ability to meaningfully and eloquently, perform the works of others as well as those of his own creation. On Saturday, April, 22, Seamus Kennedy will delight, amuse and engage the audience with his musical repertoire.

Tickets will go on sale Monday, January 2, 2006. Call the ICHC at (414) 345-8800 with questions or to order tickets.

– **Gwen Sisk**

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## **Hartnett Exhibition For Center**

The ICHC is proud to present a unique exhibition of the work of Niall Hartnett.

There will be an opening reception on Friday, February 3 at 6:30 p.m., which will be free and open to the public. Come meet this very interesting young Irishman!

Hartnett, 34, is an Irish photographer and writer and the son of acclaimed Irish poet, Michael Hartnett. His forthcoming book, *Notes from His Contemporaries* (Daedalus Press) will be published in the summer of 2006. The book serves as a tribute to his father and includes memoirs, anecdotes, poems and interviews with his father's contemporaries including our own James Liddy. Hartnett photographed the book's contributors including Seamus Heaney, James Liddy, Nuala Ni Dhomhnail, Paul Durckan and most of the noted Irish poets of today. The display at the ICHC will feature these exceptional photos, along with essays from each contributor. Hartnett photographed his subjects with a combination of hi-tech digital and old-tech medium format film and the blend of image and text makes the whole exhibit new and exciting!

The exhibition will provide a venue in February and March for readings and talks as part of our annual Liddy Chair event.

– **John Gleeson**

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# Acclaimed Performance In February

Local playwright, Michael Neville, will present his acclaimed play *Lamps for My Family* in the ICHC's Parlor B bar on Friday February 10. This wonderful, moving and humorous portrait of a family will provide a magical evening of theater performance in the grand tradition of Irish American writing. The bar will be open so come, raise your spirit and spirits and enjoy the best of Mike!

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## Color Guard News & Notes

Well it's the start of a new year and I'm sure everyone is looking onward. The Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums' travel plans have changed, perhaps you've heard. Due to a conflict in dates, we are unable to go to Texas to represent our Shamrock Club in San Antonio, but as luck would have it, and the Irish do have it, the Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums have been invited to Savannah, Georgia. This is the second largest St. Patrick's parade in the entire nation with over 400,000 people viewing it.

We take great pride in being asked to appear, but it costs money to travel, so please continue to support us by helping our fund raisers. The portrait offer is an on-going event and there are still some t-shirts left, (and they make great after-Christmas presents). Those of you who ordered cheese cakes and haven't picked them up, please call me.

A quick note with regards to St. Patrick's Church: They were very happy with both our food and clothing donations. Once again, thanks. Without everyone's help this couldn't happen.

The next Color Guard meeting is January 10, with the Pipes and Drums starting the week after. Please make these dates as March isn't that far away.

– Richard Pfieffer  
milwpiper@cs.com

## Set Dancing Class For Beginners

No better way to fill the gap between Christmas and St. Patrick's Day comes to mind than enjoying a bit of set dancing in an informal and friendly atmosphere. That, of course, describes weekly dancing at O'Donoghue's and elsewhere in the Milwaukee area.

What? You don't set dance? Well you can. Classes ideally suited for beginners will start on January 18. We've heard all the excuses and accept none of them: too many left feet, disinterested spouse, never danced, clumsy, awkward, confused. Hah. You can overcome all these. In our classes you will have a healthful, invigorating, restorative, and scintillating experience while you learn. Better than a hair restorer. (All claims pending further study.)

Why do some of us dance? Because it is fun. It is fairly easy. We enjoy other people. It's a great escape. It reminds some of the granny's kitchen. (Well, that may be a stretch now for most of us.) It's good preparation for that next trip to Ireland. It's swept across the continents and thrives in world capitals (no kidding).

The class will begin on Wednesday, January 18 at 6:30 p.m. For eight sessions we ask \$30, much of which is used to have live music at our monthly dances. No partner needed. Comfortable shoes which will slide on a good wood floor are suggested.

Preregistration is requested. Space is limited. Download a form with more information from our web site at [setmke.org], or call Jim at (414) 258-3370 for answers to most questions or to register.

O'Donoghue's is in Elm Grove at 13225 Watertown Plank Road about two miles west of I-45.

In the late Spring, the Trans Atlantic connection thrives, when From these Green Heights will be presented at the U.W.M. theatre and its author Dermot Bolger will be our guest here in Milwaukee. Indeed, Spring 2006 will be a brilliant season for lovers of Irish theater in our community. UWM will also present Brian Friel's masterpiece Philadelphia Here I Come. Milwaukee Rep will present the same authors A Month in the Country and Milwaukee Irish Arts will be offering a new Irish theater production.

– John Gleeson

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# **Douglas Hyde Commemoration And Fourth Annual Sean N6s Milwaukee Weekend**

Our fourth Sean N6s Milwaukee will take place the weekend of February 24 and 25. This will be a very special occasion for a number of reasons. We will be releasing an anthology C.D. of the best of our first three concerts featuring noted singers such as Mairin U6 Cheide, Bridget Fitzgerald, Aine Menaghan, Maiti Jo Sheamus, Celia N6 Fhatharta, Brian Hart, Virginia Stephens Blankenhorn, Moira Smiley, Sile Sighle and Navan, and Lillis O'Laoghaire. All of the above have been invited to participate in Sean N6s Milwaukee 2006 and will be joined by Liam O'Maonlai himself, a great Sean Nos singer before and apart from his time with the Hothouse Flowers.

We will also be unveiling a plaque at Milwaukee's historic Pabst Theatre to mark the centenary of Dr. Douglas Hyde's visit here in 1906. Hyde was one of the founders of the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) in 1873. He collected and published the great religious songs and love songs of Conaught. His seminal paper on the need to de-Anglicise the culture of Ireland had tremendous impact at the time and helped spark the Gaelic Revival. He helped create the Oireachtas, the first great Irish cultural festival that inspired so many others including Milwaukee Irish Fest. In 1938 Douglas Hyde became the first president of Ireland.

On the occasion of his visit to Milwaukee, he spoke of the Gaelic Revival to a capacity crowd at the Pabst that included the Governor, Archbishop, and City Officials and raised

enough funds to pay a number of badly needed Irish language teachers back in Ireland.

On Saturday, February 25 at 2 p.m., there will be a ceremony at Cudahy's Irish bar in the Pabst Theatre. The plaque will be unveiled, there will be music and singing of songs, including some of those collected by Douglas Hyde. Professor Seosamh Watson (language activist and chair emeritus of the National University of Ireland, Department of Celtic Studies) will deliver the first Hyde Memorial Lecture.

To sign up for the weekend which includes Friday night concert, Saturday morning workshops, lunch Saturday, Saturday evening sessions, and costs \$30, contact Center for Celtic Studies at (414) 229-6520. The event at Cudahy's Irish bar is free and open to the public

For further information on these events, contact the ICHC at 345-4800 or Center for Celtic Studies at 229-6520 or 229-2608.

Slan go foill,

– **John Gleeson**

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### **Ceili for Peace**

The 15th Annual Ceili for Peace will be held at the Irish Cultural Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Saturday, January 14, 2006. A ceili (kay-lee) is a traditional gathering of friends and family joining together in a celebration of music, song and dance. This very family friendly event begins with a mini concert of traditional Irish music from 7:30–8 p.m. After that, Irish jigs and reels will be taught by Ceili instructor Julie Clark from 8–10:30 p.m. Beginner and experienced dancers are welcome. Live music provided by Ceol Cairde (Music of Friends).

Admission is \$8, or \$6 and two non-perishable food items for Casa Maria Shelter. Low or fixed income \$4, children 6-16 years \$3, children under 6 free entrance. This year's proceeds benefit the work of the Peace Education Project of Peace Action Wisconsin, an organization committed to non-violence as a way of life and Casa Maria Hospitality House, a local shelter. For more information about the Ceili for Peace, please call Kristina at (414) 372-3060.

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### **I.F. School of Music**

The Milwaukee Irish Fest School of Music is happy to offer the next semester of classes. Classes begin mid January and continue for 12 weeks, one night a week on either Monday or Wednesday. Classes are held at the Irish Fest Center, 1532 Wauwatosa Ave. in Milwaukee. This year-round school began in the Fall of 2002 and has helped keep Irish traditional music alive and well in our community! Private and group lessons are offered to all ages. This semester's offerings include: lessons on banjo, bouzouki, button accordion, fiddle, flute, guitar and tin whistle. Special three week workshops are offered in: "Irish Piano Accompaniment" and "Playing Music in Traditional Irish Sessions". For a full class brochure, please visit [[www.irishfest.com](http://www.irishfest.com)] or call Kristina Paris at (414) 372-3060.

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### **Celtic Women First Friday Lectures**

**JANUARY 6, 2006**

**TOPIC:** "Wit and Humor to Brighten the Winter Days" (A time to laugh)

**SPEAKER:** Madelon Coogan Pritchard

Growing up in a farm household near Watertown that included 17 brothers and sisters, an Irish household at that, gave this Shorewood woman material for entertainment that has lasted a lifetime. Her repertoire includes radio, television, industrial/educational, theater, a wide variety of accents (even bird calls that get birds answering her) and presentations at all sorts of non-profit groups. Madelon loves nothing more than making people laugh; she feels it is her mission in life to spread cheer. This will be very welcome during January's dark winter days.

Lectures are held from 5:30 – 7 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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# **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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### **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 – Rockne Elgid Family (referred by Rich Pfeiffer, Shamrock club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums).

– **Tom Smith**

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