



Jan. 2011

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Wellies, Father Ted, and Goats – Festivals in Ireland

by Brian Witt

Are you planning a trip to Ireland, and want to see the different, the unusual, perhaps journey off the beaten track? Are the castle tours getting too passé for your taste? The Emerald Isle offers a wide variety of festivals throughout the year that may appeal to your sense of adventure. Here is a list of just a few of the annual celebrations offered during the course of the year.

Castlecomer Wellie Festival – Co. Kilkenny – January 1

This annual event is a long standing fixture on the New Year calendar and must rank as one of the most unusual events in Ireland. At the heart of the festivities is the Wellie race, in which competitors' race over a 5km circuit of roads wearing Wellington rubber boots, aka Wellies.

The wellies must be standard unaltered issue – not the best footwear for running, but it is quite a sight to see hundreds of runners lined up suitably shod at the start of the race.

Many of those taking part wear costumes also, but there are also those who take the race very seriously, in spite of the nonchalant demeanor, and it is hotly contested.

The race is preceded by a parade through the streets of Castlecomer with floats created by local businesses and community groups. The race has been taking place annually since 1981.

TedFest 5 – February 24-27 – Inishmore, Aran Islands, Co. Galway

The festival celebrates the cult TV series Father Ted, and as anyone familiar with it will know that means madness, mayhem and

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total chaos are not just inevitable but desirable.

Planned events include Buckaroo and Movie Charades, a Jesuit Country & Western Hour, Priests v Nuns Beach Volleyball, and the annual Lovely Girls Competition!

The event is limited to just over 100 people. Knowing the words of the famous and much loved Father Ted composition, "My Lovely Horse," and an undying love of tea and sandwiches are required attributes for those attending, although there is a beer garden for those who tire of tea!

Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival – Co. Clare – October 1-31

Europe's largest Matchmaking Festival draws throngs of people to Lisdoonvarna each year, and if you cannot find that special person at one of the many events, there are matchmakers on hand to assist.

It's an extraordinary event, with dancing and music beginning most days at noon and continuing non-stop into the small hours of the morning.

The best known of the matchmakers is Willie Daly, who deals in horses when not dealing in love and who claims to have been instrumental in getting hundreds, if not thousands, of couples to the altar.

Some nods to change are incorporated – there are speed-dating events these days – but mostly the modus operandi is to provide lots of opportunities for people to get together at dances, sessions and in the pubs.

Each weekend the events are focused on some activity, from horse racing on the opening weekend, country music the following one, three weekends devoted to dancing, then the final fling, where the Queen of the Burren and Mr. Lisdoonvarna are crowned.

The Dunmore-East-Bluegrass Festival, Dunmore-East, Co. Waterford - August

This Bluegrass Festival usually takes place on the last Thursday through Monday in August in the town of Dunmore East. The festival has been organized since 1995 by Mick Daly, who mixes old-time country, bluegrass and futuristic newgrass acts.

Castle Palooza Festival – Charleville Castle, Co. Offaly – July

The Castle Palooza Festival is a boutique Irish music festival usually occurs on the August Bank Holiday weekend i.e., the first weekend in August. There are massages, dance classes, art exhibitions and full beauticians available. Hot showers are promised by the organizers.

Puck Fair – Kilorglin, Co. Kerry – August

The Puck Fair occurs the second Thursday until the following



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The Puck Fair occurs the second Thursday until the following Sunday in August, in Kilorglin.

Festival history has it that Oliver Cromwell's army invaded the area of Kerry at the foot of the McGillicuddy Reeks mountain range. They pushed a grazing herd of goats aside, but a male goat (or puck) charged past the army, and into the village of Kilorglin, where he arrived exhausted and panting. This goat gave the village of Kilorglin enough notice to hide their livestock.

Every year a group of people go up the mountains near Kilorglin and catch a wild goat, which is then put into a small cage on a tall stand. He will then be crowned the King of the Puck Fair. The goat's silence will serve as an acceptance of the title.

Get your passports ready. Excitement awaits the traveler.

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Milwaukee President's Message

Greetings and Happy New Year,

Sorry if you missed my column last month but it appears that one can't transmit an e-mail across the Atlantic in 140k winds and driving rain. Or maybe you can if you hit the send button. And darn it was a good one.

Last year, our 50th Anniversary year was quite exciting and I hope to carry that momentum into this year.

The International Folk Fair was another success for the Club. It is a showcase to display our proud Irish heritage to those in the greater Milwaukee area. Thanks to General Chairperson Malkin Wallace, Retail booth chair Kris Pluskota, Food Booth Chair Mary Culver and Cultural Booth Chair Denis Donohoe and to our many, many volunteers.

Thanks to all who donated to the Club's Thanksgiving food drive. Due to your generosity Kathy Donovan and Dawn Fleming were able to provide a turkey or ham dinner with all the fixings to five needy families.

Our Christmas party was another huge success. Thanks to all who brought a dish or dessert to pass. The abundance and variety of food for our events never ceases to amaze me.

Our Christmas Carolers, Kathy and Dawn, Pete Fleming and Julie Smith braved the elements, two inches of snow to be exact, to deliver an exciting program of music and good cheer to our shut-in members and their friends. The choir was greeted with such

enthusiasm that they have already been invited back for next year. A pretty good accomplishment in the choir's inaugural year.

Don't forget that nominations for next years Irishman, Irish Rose and Parade Marshal are due by the January 27th board meeting. All nominations must be in writing and all nominees must be members in good standing.

This years parade is March 12 and will be headed by Parade Production Manager, Kris Pluskota (new title, same duties) and Parade Manager Mike Boyle, assisted by Meghan and Erin Boyle and past Parade Marshal Bill Sherry. Mike returns as the co-chair of the parade after a few years absence in that position. Thanks to Mike O'Leary for his years of leadership as Parade Manager.

Last year saw the passing of two of our finest members, Chuck Ward and Tom Blaha, both past Irishmen of the Year, both integral members of the Club.

Chuck served as past president and was always a great spokesperson for the Club and supporter of Irish culture in the community. I learned of Chuck's passing while vacationing in Ireland. A few times in different locales when asked where are you from –Milwaukee?– Do you know of the Irish Fest? Have you heard about Chuck Ward?

And who could forget the twinkle in his eye and his infectious chuckle and good nature. A true Irishman.

And Tom, who was a charter member of the Shamrock Club Color Guard, volunteered for everything. His passing was a complete shock to many of us. He had served on the 50th Anniversary committee, never missing a meeting, updating us on his family he was so proud of and always offering to do more. Tom and Maggie never failed to say hello or to offer a seat at their table to an old friend or new member. He, at his service, was called "a gentle man" and St. Thomas. Simply true.

Please remember both families in your prayers.

– **Josh Walton, President joshwalton1@yahoo.com**

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New Dublin News

?Athbhliain faoi mhaise duit! A prosperous New Year! to you all from the Shamrock Club of New Dublin. As March is quickly approaching, we've finalized another big part of our celebration, and are pleased to announce our parade Grand Marshals for 2011. They are Tony and Lorraine Van Kampen. Tony and

Lorraine are very involved in our community and own and operate two McDonalds restaurants. We're very happy to have them.

Over the holidays we shared a nice holiday dinner with club members. It was a wonderful evening and a nice break from all of the holiday madness. We also made that an evening to help others as we do each year by asking that each member bring along a donation to the local food pantry.

Beginning this month we meet each Monday at 7:30 p.m. above the Midtown Pub and Grill in downtown New Dublin.

– **Carrie Katerzynske**

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Milwaukee St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 12, 2011

Downtown Milwaukee –
3rd and Wisconsin to Highland and State Streets

Step off: Noon

Pipe Bands, Dance Schools, Wisconsin's Irish community

[<http://www.saintpatricksparade.org>]

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Brian Witt Irish Fest 2010 Volunteer of Year

Former Shamrock Club President Brian Witt was named Irish Fest's Volunteer of the Year for 2010. Brian is the co-coordinator of the Cultural Exhibitions Tent, and was in charge of the festival's history display, the Voyager Tent this year. He is also a member of the Summer School, online development, and getaway weekend committees. He has been co-coordinator since 1991, first with Kathy Radaj, and in recent years with Cynthia Nazario. Brian was also the Irishman of the Year in 2004.

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Celtic Women First Friday Lectures



Margaret Rogers

The Celtic Women First Friday Lecture Series continues with an original play written by Margaret Rogers; it is an interesting and little-known historical footnote to the British occupation of Ireland. Join us at UWM Greene Hall from 5:30–7 p.m. \$7 admission with lots of homemade treats and tea to warm the January cold.

Everyone welcome!

DATE: January 7, 2011, 5:30-7 p.m.

TOPIC: “The Wrens of the Curragh”

SPEAKER: Margaret Rogers

Certain women in 19th century Ireland, County Kildare, made their living by following the British troops, bringing them comfort. There were several communities of miserable abodes called “nests”, hence the name wrens. An original piece by playwright Margaret Rogers; she has been writing plays since 1986 for Irish Fest, Old World Wisconsin, Shamrock Club, Celtic Women’s Conference in New Orleans and Historical Societies.

Several members of the Celtic Nations bagpipe band gave us a wonderful concert at our Christmas Social in December. It was a last-minute thing due to the illness of our speaker, and the pipers were so gracious to help out. It was a special treat and so appreciated.



Celtic Nations Bagpipers: Ken Heeshan, Mark Klamut, Ringo Bowen, SaraJane Trier, Kent Brodie, Gina Crossley.

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"Comas" Makes North American Debut at ICHC Jan. 15

Firmly rooted in Irish music and keeping a respectful eye on the past, *Comas* (Irish Gaelic for power,) makes room for original compositions and influences. The band, which has performed exclusively in Europe since 2003, will make their North American debut at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., on Saturday, Jan. 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Individually based in Brittany, Ireland, Belgium and the United States, the band members forged their varied cultural influences into a unique blend of traditional Irish music that has made them enormously popular at major European music festivals. London's *Irish Post* called them "one of Europe's most sensational Celtic bands" and "four of the most exciting musicians of their generation."

Comas fiddle player Aidan Burke, cousin of well-known fiddler Kevin Burke, was the unintentional catalyst for *Comas*. He invited Irish-American percussionist Jackie Moran and Breton flute/uilleann pipes player Sylvain Barou to add tracks on a solo album he was working on at the recording studio of guitarist/bouzouki player Philip Masure in Belgium. They organized a few gigs to help pay travel expenses and enjoyed the experience so much that they formed a band.

Moran who was born in Co. Tipperary and emigrated to Chicago when he was 10, is familiar to Milwaukee area audiences as a founding member of bands including *Bua*, *The Drovers* and *Wilding* as well as performances with Liz Carroll, John Williams, and John Doyle, among others.

Tickets for the show are \$19 in advance and \$23 the day of concert with discounts for students and groups. The subscription price for three of the Hallamor concerts is \$51.30. The Classic Celtic concert on March 20 is \$10 or \$61.30 for all four concerts. To order online, visit [www.ichc.net]. Tickets may also be ordered by calling (414) 345-8800.

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David Francey at Irish Fest Center on Jan. 16

Canadian singer-songwriter David Francey will be presenting his beautifully crafted songs, colorful stories, and wry sense of humor back for a third concert at the Irish Fest Center, 1532 Wauwatosa Ave., Milwaukee, on Sunday, Jan. 16. Tickets for the 3 p.m. show are \$15.

New Hampshire based guitarist/bouzouki player Craig Werth will accompany Francey as well as add harmonies and some of his own original songs.

The Scottish-born Francey was working as a construction site carpenter when he won the first of three JUNO Awards (the Canadian equivalent of the Grammy) in 2002 for his second album, *Far End of Summer*. He left carpentry shortly thereafter to pursue a full time career as a performing artist.

Francey is recognized internationally as one of today's finest singer-songwriters and performs at festivals and concert stages across North America, Europe and Australia. He has been honored with multiple awards and nominations, most recently the 2010 John Lennon Songwriting Award Grand Prize in the folk category for *The Waking Hour* from the album of the same name.

Call (414) 332-8521 or e-mail [kathy@turkeyhollow.com] for information and tickets. Tickets also available at the door.

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Nominations For Irish Honorees

Nominations for the 2011 Irish honorees, Irish Rose, Irishman of

the Year, Parade Marshal, must be received by 6 p.m. January 27, before the start of the Shamrock Club Board meeting.

Nominations must be in writing, or e-mailed, and be made by members in good standing. Nominations can be mailed to Shamrock Club, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233, or e-mailed to Josh Walton at [joshwalton1@yahoo.com]. Our board meeting will start at 6 p.m. that evening, with the general business conducted first, and the selection of our honorees done in a closed session after the conclusion of the general business.

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Donations in Patricia Fuch's Name

Thank you to the many individuals who contributed to Shamrock Club Scholarship fund in the memory of Patricia A. Fuchs. Over \$500 was given to the fund in her honor.

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Milwaukee Bylaws Committee Review

The bylaws committee has completed its review. Suggested changes will be published in an upcoming edition of *Emerald Reflections*. After review by the general membership, if no other changes are suggested, they will be voted on for approval.

– Tom McAleese, Parliamentarian

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A Few of the Many Volunteers of Holiday Folk Fair 2010

Photos courtesy of Ron Danielson



Walsh sisters, Sharon and Rosemary



Glen Nowak



Ron Danielson



Joe Hughes

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Color Guard News & Notes

Happy New Year to Everyone!

Hope this article finds you happy and satisfied after a wonderful Christmas and Hogmanay. All the shopping and reveling in the past weeks will soon give way to the green season!

The SCCGPD continue to practice with the Milwaukee Fire and Police and Celtic Nation bands. We are building up our repertoire of tunes. People will be impressed in March.

The group lost one of our leaders with the passing of Tom Blaha. He was always my absolute favorite of the old guard, and he always treated me with great respect. Such a loss for the world. Such a loss. I'm going to miss him immensely. This man touched many, many lives, but left a legacy that will never be forgotten.

I have a new job, so this is a short message. We will see you in February. Endure the snow and winds of winter.

– Noel Tylla, 7th year piper

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Milwaukee January

Membership News

I would like to express my best wishes for all to a happy and prosperous New Year !!!!

Currently the Milwaukee Chapter as of December 1 has not changed with 391 Members representing 186 Family and 187 single memberships. Statewide our Membership totals 505 Members.

Please be sure to have your memberships renewals in before January 31 for those who's expire on or before 1/31/2011.

Also, please include your e-mail address, as we are trying to build up our contact ability.

We hope you can attend our January meeting with the Chili Cook Off.

– Denis Donohoe, Membership Chair

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Donate to the Shamrock Club

The Shamrock Club is a 501(C) (3) corporation. If you donate to us, you can write this off on your taxes. Donate to our Scholarship fund, our general fund, or to the parade. Thank you!

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Veronica's Cupboard

Thank you to all those who contributed to our Christmas Banquet. It was an important time to get together and share stories and remembrances of Tom Blaha and Chuck Ward, two very special members who left us such a short time ago to spend Christmas in Heaven. Their loss certainly set the tone for a real old-fashioned Irish family time!

Thanks to our decorating committee for the beautiful banquet hall they designed for us: Kathy Donovan, Dawn Fleming, Julie Smith and Kris Ploskuta are Santa's elves. And, Santa was present and jolly as ever.

January brings the much anticipated Chili Competition. Anyone who cooks chili is convinced that her/his recipe is the very best.

who cooks chili is convinced that her/his recipe is the very best. So, cleanse your palette and bring your appetites. Last year's event was such fun and so well attended. Do call Veronica to register: (414) 228-8621 or e-mail: [irishv@ameritech.net]. Prizes will be awarded.

Your help is needed: A-G crackers; H-P salads; Q-Z dessert. Please make your offerings light as the chili will certainly almost be enough. A suggestion: bring your own soup spoon, it'll be easier to scoop up the tasty morsels.

February features foods in shades of red: lasagne, red cabbage salad, Valentine cookies, etc. Be creative and do your bit to help. Thanks!

– **Veronica Ceszynski, (414) 228-8621**

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Members' Doings

Fran Pauls recently completed a first ever trip to Ireland (11 days) which included a bus tour around the coast line of the island. This included three days in Northern Island and daily stops at new cities of interest. Weather was great.

Bill and Loretta O'Boyle recently spent 14 days in Japan, along with Bills' brother Dennis. They toured Nara, the original capitol, and Kyoto, the current capitol. They toasted Shamrock Club members at two Irish pubs in Kyoto.

Milwaukee Irish Fest recently had elections. Shamrock Club members of the Irish Fest board are: Cathy Ward, secretary, Mike Dahm, treasurer, Lori Dahm, Bob Mikush, Ed Ward, Barb Tyler, and Timm Heck. Congratulations to them all.

If you have done anything you want us to know about, send it to [Membersdoings @shamrockclubwis.com].

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Sunshine Club

Tom Blaha died recently. He was 1999 Irishman of the Year and was a long time member of the Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums. Tom was also the co-chair of the Sunshine Club, along with his wife, Maggie. The two were Parade Marshals in 1989. the first couple to be selected. Tom met Maggie at a

1967, the first couple to be selected. Tom met Maggie at a Shamrock Club meeting, and the rest was history. He is survived by sons Paul and Steve, and daughter Annie, as well as many grandchildren and many friends.

Sharon Murphy recently had bunion surgery. Mary Culver and Jerry Hill were also hospitalized recently. Kris Pluskota's sister has been hospitalized recently, as well. Keep them in your thoughts.

If you have any news for the Sunshine Club, please call me at (414) 344-0688. I have a new email address. Please note: [slainte4142-shamrock@yahoo.com].

– **Maggie and Tom Blaha**