The Irish Goddesses – The Morrigan

As we meet the tenth month, we think of things autumnal: the smell of fallen leaves, the early arrival of the darkening sky, harvest bounties. And of course, Halloween.

Halloween, or Samhain, the most Irish of ancient Celtic holidays, was the new year in the ancient Celtic calendar. The end of harvest and the beginning of winter brought the darkest time of the year, and it was also when the veil between the two worlds, of the living and the dead, was the thinnest. It was when things that went bump in the night might have been your long-dead relatives.

And Ireland is the home of many of the spooky and eerie creatures that have occupied Irish mythology as well. The Far Liath, the Grey Man; the bean sidhe, or banshee, the harbinger of impending death for those of the Gaelic Order. (Sorry, for you of Norman blood. She doesn’t visit your families.) The shape-changing púca. Then there are those goddesses of ancient Ireland. Many had multiple personalities. They covered the gamut from fertility to kingship, war and horses. The first, Macha, is, from ancient Irish times, associated with the province of Ulster, particularly with the sites of Navan Fort (Eamhain Mhacha) and Armagh (Ard Mhacha), which are named after her. Several figures called Macha appear in Irish mythology and folklore, all believed to derive from the same goddess. She is said to be one of three sisters known as ‘the three Morrigan’. Like other sovereignty goddesses, Macha is associated with the land, fertility, kingship, war and horses. The name is presumably derived from Proto-Celtic word denoting “a plain.”

Macha was the wife of Cruinniuc, an Ulster farmer. Sometime after the death of Cruinniuc’s first wife, Macha appears at his house. Without speaking, she begins keeping the house and acting as his wife. Soon she becomes pregnant by him. As long as they were together, Cruinniuc’s wealth grew. When he leaves to attend a festival organized by the king of Ulster, she warns him that she will only stay with him so long as he does not speak of her to anyone, and he promises to say nothing. However, during a chariot race, he boasts that his wife can run faster than the king’s horses.

The king orders Cruinniuc be held on pain of death unless he can make good on his claim. Although she is heavily pregnant, Macha is brought to the gathering and the king forces her to race the horses. She wins the race, but then cries out in pain as she gives birth to twins on the finish line; a boy named Fir (“True”) and a girl named Fial (“Modest”). For disrespecting and humiliating her, she curses the men of Ulster to be overcome with weakness, as weak "as a woman in childbirth," at the time of their greatest need. This weakness would last for five days and the curse would last for nine generations. Thereafter, the place where Macha gave birth would be called Emain Macha, or "Macha's twins”.

This Macha is particularly associated with horses—it is perhaps significant that twin colts were born on the same day as Cuchulainn, and that one of his chariot-horses was called Liath Macha or "Macha's Grey.”

Macha’s sister, Clíodhna, (pronounced Cleena), is a Queen of the Banshees of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Clíodna of Carrig-Cleena is the potent banshee that rules as queen over the sidheog (fairy women of the hils) of South Munster, or Desmond. Clíodna is a goddess of love and beauty, and the patron of County Cork. She is said to have three brightly colored birds who eat apples from an otherworldly tree and whose sweet song heals the sick. She leaves the otherworldly island of Tir Tairngire ("the land of promise") to be with her mortal lover, Ciabhán, but is taken by a wave as she sleeps due to the music played by a minstrel of Manannan mac Lir in Glandore harbour in County Cork: the tide there is known as Tonn Chlíodhna, "Clíodhna's Wave". Whether she drowns or not depends on the version being told, along with many other details of the story. She had her palace in the heart of a pile of rocks, five miles from Mallow, which is still commonly known by the name of Carrig-Cleena, and numerous legends about her are told among the Munster peasantry.

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Milwaukee Calendar of Events
For More Information visit http://shamrockclubwis.com

OCTOBER
4 Shamrock Club Monthly Meeting; ICHC; 7 pm; Dinner at 6:30
4 Chvrches; Riverside Theater; 8:00 pm
9 Celtic Women International Book Club; Rape of the Fair Country, by Alex Cordell. Hostess: Barbara Fishbauer.
11 Celtic Women International Book Club; Outside Mullingar, performance at Next Act Theater; 1:30 pm.
13 Celtic Thunder; Riverside Theater; 7:30 pm
20 Friends of St. Patrick Centre; “Ireland and the Potato” Event; Trinity Episcopal Church, 1717 Church St., Wauwatosa; 6:00-9 pm.
26-November 4 In Tandem Theatre Presents Bram Stoker's Dracula the Rock Opera; 628 N 10 Street; 414-271-1371
27 Set Dance Milwaukee October Dance; ICHC; music by athas; 7 pm

NOVEMBER
1 Shamrock Club Monthly Meeting; ICHC; 7 pm; Dinner at 6:30 pm
16 Jimmy Keane and Dennis Cahill; Reelin in the Years; Irish Cultural and Heritage Center; 7:30 pm
16-18 International Holiday Folk Fair; State Fair Park
16 Celtic Boutique; Celtic MKE Center, 1532 N Wauwatosa; 9 am-3 pm

DECEMBER
6 Shamrock Club Monthly Meeting & Christmas Party; ICHC; 7 pm; Dinner at 6:30 pm
11 Celtic Women International Book Club; Christmas Lunch, location TBD.

ON GOING … Set dancing at the following: Set dancing Wednesdays, 7 PM at O’Donoghue’s; Craobh Curtin Conradh na Gaeilge meeting at O’Donoghue’s Pub, 7 PM, last Tuesday each month; Irish Emigration Library in ICHC open every Wednesday 12-6 PM; Irish Sing-a-long, Irish Fest Center, First Sundays, (through May) 7 PM; Irish Fest Sing-a-long: O’Donoghue’s Pub, second and fourth Sundays, 7-9 PM; Irish Music Sessions at the following: Session - O’Donoghue’s, Sundays 7 PM; Thursdays @ Paddy’s 7 PM; and The Pub in Oconomowoc, 7:30 PM
Thursdays: Barry Dodd; County Clare Inn; 10 PM; Fridays: áthas and Myserk; County Clare Inn; 6 PM

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Publisher Needed
The Shamrock Club is in need of a volunteer to take over the publication of our monthly newsletter, the Emerald Reflections.

Please contact Pam Canon for more information.
dpcanon@wi.rr.com

Jameson’s Corner Cupboard

In preparation for all things fall and fun we will be doing a submarine sandwich theme for our menu. The club will provide the buns and meat. There were cards for people to select from for designated items to bring. If you took one please be sure to bring that item, if you didn’t, a dish or dessert to pass is always welcome. Looking forward to seeing you at the October general meeting.

- Jameson Fraters
Sergeant-at-Arms

Rent the ICHC for your next Party Meeting Recital Wedding

Spaces available for large or small events

Email: director@ichc.net or call (414) 345-8800
Emerald Reflections
Copy Deadline
Content for Emerald Reflections is due on the 15th of the month (next deadline: Oct. 15th to appear in the November issue.) Copy received after that date will not appear due to deadlines. While we try to include every submission possible, due to space limitations, we cannot guarantee that every submission will be included immediately. E-mail submissions preferred, send to:
Brian Witt, Editor
emeraldreflections@shamrockclubwis.com
Pam Canon, Publisher
Mary Moze, Proofreader

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To become a member of the Shamrock Club of Wisconsin contact the membership chair of the chapter you would like to join. MILWAUKEE ONLY: Family membership (includes both parents and all children under eighteen) - $36.00. Single membership - $24.00. Membership is renewable annually on the anniversary month of the original membership. Please send all new and renewal Milwaukee club membership dues to Membership Chair, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233. Be sure to send change of address notification to Membership Chair, also. The post office will NOT forward copies of Reflections.

Milwaukee President’s Message
Since my last message, Irish Fest has come and gone. The weather was perfect for the festival. I remember fest in the past where rain was a factor every day. I bought a couple of shirts, one a hockey jersey, with “Guinness” prominently displayed, front and rear, with the bright colors of a toucan. I bought another T-shirt that is silly, but the price was right! I love the music, dancing, food, and the connection to my Irish heritage. But most of all, I enjoy the meeting of old friends, and making new ones. I spotted a lady carrying a t-shirt with an image in the colors of the Irish flag. The image was just three vertical splashes of color, but you could see the Cliffs of Moher in the design. I asked where she got the T-shirt, and she told me that the source was out of the shirts, but they were a promotion from the Galway tourism tent. A short time later, I went to that tent, and found that same lady, Maura Fay, working there. I asked if there was a way I could buy the shirt anywhere. She saw that I was wearing the “Irish Man of the Year” sash, and told me that she would send me one, if I would furnish my name and address, handing me an index card for that purpose. She said that the Man of the Year should have that T-shirt.

Yesterday, September 12, I got a package from Ireland, containing 2 T-shirts, one of the colorful ones that I saw, and another, solid colored Tee with a small graphic depiction of the cliffs, with the words “Cliffs of Moher Ireland”. There was also a note from Maura Fay, telling me how much she enjoys coming to Irish Fest and meeting new people. She apparently works for the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience. That package not only made my day, but probably the entire month! She did respond to my “thank you” email, but declined to answer as to how I could repay the favor….I am trying to come up with an appropriate gift to send to Ireland. Any suggestions?

I attended the Shamrock Club of Wisconsin State Advisory Board meeting on IF Saturday morning, with Joe Hughes, and Taffy Anderson. Each of the chapters gave a short report on their activities. Fundraising, new member recruitment, and keeping a public presence were a common theme.

I was honored, along with Irish Rose Jackie Konkol, to be a part of the Mass on Sunday morning. We presented the gifts at the altar to Archbishop Jerome Listecki, and he spoke very briefly with each of us. That was quite an experience.

The next important event facing us is the International Holiday Folk Fair, coming in the middle of November. If the Shamrock Club is to have a Café at the HFF, we need a volunteer to take charge of that area. So far we have had no one stepping forward. Mary Koehler will again chair the Merchandise booth, and I have been told that we have co-chairs for the Cultural exhibit, one of them being, Brian Witt. More will be said at the October General Membership meeting.

Mary Koehler, Josh Walton, and I attended the first Holiday Folk Fair’s meetings on September 12th. This will be the 75th annual folk fair, with the theme being “Diversity”. A second meeting is planned for October 20th. The Shamrock Club is committed to purchasing fifty tickets to the HFF to sell. Volunteers working our booths will get participant passes, but if you know of non-volunteers who want to attend, sell them a ticket…The price is $10, but the price of a ticket at the door is $12.

Finally, The Emerald Reflections is in need of a new publisher. Pam Canon is retiring from her role as publisher. Final confirmation of a replacement is still pending. In addition to a new publisher, the format of the Emerald Reflections may change. A change will make it easier to publish and cheaper to mail the hard copies that we must make for those who choose not to get the electronic version.

Promote the Shamrock Club. We all meet people, so mention the SC when it is appropriate. Invite them to a meeting and mention that we will feed them if they come early! The person you offer a meal to may be our next valuable volunteer! We can’t have too many of them. Irish every day!

Ron Danielson, President
Membership Report

Now that Irish Fest is over, I will be working on sending out notices for membership dues. New membership forms are being created to reflect the change in fees and will be distributed soon. As we prepare for the Holiday Folk Fair in two months, please keep in mind that we will need volunteers for the event. Watch for an online sign up and a sign up sheet at the next meetings.

Please contact Molly Modlinski with any questions at: membership@shamrockclubwis.com

- Molly Modlinski, Membership Chair

Celtic Women International

The CWI Book Club meetings begin at 1:00 pm at the ICHC and include discussion, tea, and treats. New members and guests are always welcome to join us!

Barbara Fishbauer will be our hostess on October 9th. We will discuss Rape of the Fair Country, by Alex Cordell.

On October 10th, we will attend Outside Mullingar, at Next Act Theater. The performance begins at 1:30 pm.

Doll Face, by Dylan H Jones, will be our topic on November 13th, and our hostess will be Maureen Garry.

On December 11th we will celebrate the holiday season with our Christmas Lunch, Location tbd.

- Rosemary Walsh

Shamrock Club Retail

Retail will be looking for another good group of volunteers to sign up for the Holiday Folk Fair. We will be setting up on Thurs, Nov 15, selling Nov 16-18, and tearing down on Sunday evening, Nov 18. More details to come.

- Mary Koehler, Retail Chair

Sunshine Report

Happy forty-fourth wedding anniversary to Pete and Dawn Fleming on September 14th.

Warm, pleasant, fun birthday wishes to the following members: Glenn Nowak – Sept. 19th, Sue Suit – Sept. 24th, Declan Blaha – 30th.

Gratitude for improved good health to Chuck McLaughlin.

Please contact Maggie Blaha, Sunshine chair, with information concerning our members who can use a bit of cheer or contact with their Irish friends. Maggie can be contacted at mailto:slainte4142-shamrock@yahoo.com.

- Maggie Blaha, Sunshine Chair

Facebook & Social Media

If you haven’t seen us on Facebook, like us! 2230 people have already. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shamrock-Club-of-Wisconsin/102023943184

You can also find us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/shamrockclubwisi or on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/shamrock-club-of-wisconsin.

- Rosemary Walsh

Ireland & the Potato

The Friends of Saint Patrick Centre, Milwaukee Chapter will be holding a fundraising benefit to support their Young Ambassador Program on Saturday, October 20th from 6:00-9 pm at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1717 Church St., Wauwatosa. The evening will feature music by Evan & Tom Leahy, Irish dancers and the Wisconsin Potato Growers Spudmobile.

Tickets are $15, and include a supersized potato buffet, soup, salad and dessert. For more information, contact Judie at 262-641-9192 or email FOSPMKE@gmail.com.

Friends of Saint Patrick
Milwaukee Chapter
Saturday, October 20, 2018
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
at Trinity Episcopal Church
1717 Church St. Wauwatosa, WI
Supersized potato buffet soup, salad & dessert
Spudmobile
from the Potato Growers of Wisconsin
Irish Dancers
Evan & Tom Leahy
from Folk O’dow
$15 per person.
For Tickets call: Judie at 262-641-9192
Visa and Mastercard are accepted
Checks should be made out to: Friends of Saint Patrick Centre Milwaukee Chapter or email FOSPMKE@gmail.com
Like us on Facebook at Friends of Saint Patrick Centre Milwaukee Chapter
Badb, part of a trio of war goddesses known as the Moarb, is associated with war and death, appearing either to foreshadow imminent bloodshed or to participate in battles, where she creates confusion among the soldiers. As a harbinger of doom, she appears in a number of different guises. In Togail Bruidne Dá Derga, she takes the form of an ugly hag who prophesies Conaire Mór’s downfall. She appears in a similar guise in Togail Bruidne Dá Choca to foretell the slaying of Cormac Conloinges, as well as taking the form of a “washer at the ford”—a woman washing Cormac’s chariot and harness in a ford in what was considered an omen of death. The cries of Badb may also be an ill omen: Cormac’s impending death was foreshadowed with the words “The red-mouthed badbs will cry around the house, / For bodies they will be solicitous” and “Pale badbs shall shriek”.

She was also regularly depicted as an active participant in warfare; indeed, the battlefield was sometimes referred to as “the garden of the Badb”. During the First Battle of Mag Tuired, Badb—a woman washing Cormac’s chariot and harness in a ford—encountered the Tuatha Dé Danann. Using their magic, the three sisters incite fear and confusion among the Fir Bolg army, conjuring “clouds of mist and a furious rain of fire” and allowing their enemies “neither rest nor stay for three days and nights”. Badb plays a similar role in the Táin Bó Cúailnge, (the Cattle Raid of Cooley), terrorizing and disorienting the forces of Queen Medb and causing many to fall on their own weapons. She would often take the form of a screaming raven or crow, striking fear into those who heard her, and could also be heard as a voice among the corpses on a battlefield.

Maybe one needs to look at the scary creatures associated with Samhain, or Halloween. The crow or the raven may be the greater threat, more than a black cat, of impending doom. And if you see one, and hear a banshee, recall that they are a sign of the three sisters.

Happy Halloween.

- Brian Witt

Thank You

Dear Shamrock Club Members,

I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity over the past 6+ years to serve you as the publisher of the Emerald Reflections.

While I have very much enjoyed working on the project every month, I find that I now have other commitments in my life that I must devote my time to.

I very much appreciate the trust that you all put in me to get the publication done each month. I would like to thank all those who assisted me, especially Brian Witt, for writing so many of the articles and handling much of the content, Mary Moze and Julie Smith, for their proof-reading time and talents, and all those who submitted articles over the years. I couldn’t have done it without you!

- Pam Canon
An Old Gaelic Prayer

May the Road Rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
    till the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And, until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hands.