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High Crosses of Ireland



by Joan Kapp Kreuser

The beautiful Celtic crosses (also called High crosses or Irish crosses) of Ireland can be found sprinkled throughout the countryside – and, in some cases, they reside “indoors” to preserve them from the wet, damp element of Irish weather. A case in point would be the exceptional ninth century Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise. Age and the outdoor elements have pretty much obscured the biblical scenes, making the identity of some of the figures difficult at best. Some, by virtue of placement and knowledge of biblical history are identifiable.

The cross shape has been used widely by many ancient people. The four arms were sometimes used to denote the four seasons, or the four directions, or, in some cases, the four parts of mankind: mind, body, heart, and soul. The actual history of the ring at the junction of the crossbeams is unknown, and one of the projected meanings was simply that the addition of the circle was pleasing to the eye. Some ancient people thought a circle represented the moon, and the circle with cross symbolized the sun. In any event, the origin of the cross with circle is heathen. As near as can be told, the earliest crosses date from the late seventh century, appearing mostly in Ireland, but also in Scotland and Wales.

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Because of their size and weight, these monumental crosses were well able to survive in their original locations the onslaught and plundering adventures of the invading Viking raiders.

The crosses are made from sandstone (some of the very early ones were probably made from wood and have rotted away through the years) and granite and have a ring, now signifying eternity, surrounding the intersection of the cross. The earliest crosses were carved in large slabs of rock that lay flat on the ground. With the passage of years, and probably with additional skill of the builders, the crosses assumed an upright stance and the artwork became more elaborate.

The artwork on the crosses, besides telling biblical stories, also was designed with abstract ornamentation (such as spirals, knobs, animals, foliage designs, knot work, and key patterns) and what those signify is somewhat, as they say, up for grabs. Both Old and New Testament stories are featured on the crosses. Many have bases or stepped bases, and capstones or a shingled roof. Whereas the ringed cross has come to signify Ireland to many, the cross is correctly called a Celtic cross as other Celtic nations, notably Scotland and Wales, have many of their own.

Originally the biblical figures were sharp and clear and identifying them and the stories on the crosses was easy. Since some scholars feel that some of the early crosses were brightly painted, their appearance today is far different than it was in century's past. With the passage of time, much cross detail has worn and faded away.

An Irish legend (NOTE: this is a LEGEND, not fact) tells us that St. Patrick, when standing in front of a group of heathens, drew a cross over a circular pagan cross symbol and blessed it, thus creating the Celtic cross. This is an example of how a Druid idea or symbol was changed into a Christian one. In any event, the crosses soon were carved with Biblical stories and the lives of saints. In an era when the general public did not have the ability to read, the crosses told the masses Biblical stories, starting with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and going on from there. The crosses, perhaps, could be called the earliest Bibles in Ireland.

Why so many Celtic crosses in Ireland? Well, for starters, there were many monasteries in Ireland in its early years, and monasteries and crosses do seem to go together. Today the ruins of so many of the beautiful, ancient ones left standing (around 100 of the historical crosses are in existence today) are on monastery grounds or in cemeteries. Many designate simply a holy place or were used as boundary markers for monastery land, or marked the sacred spots associated with saints.

Today you will find new crosses in cemeteries used as grave markers, not only in Ireland, but also in many other countries around the world.

You will also find small crystal, ceramic, brass, other metal, stone

(you name the material) Celtic crosses for sale to tourists in Ireland or through the many Irish catalogues that pepper the States. Celtic crosses to wear around your neck or as earrings and pins are also popular.

Thus this oldest of Irish symbols (the ancient originals still a tourist attraction in Ireland) has moved into the modern era and flourishes handily.

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HIGH CROSS

By Kathy Mallon

stone storytellers
tower skyward
and
silently preach
parables and promises
of
life everlasting
with
outstretched limbs
of
limestone lacings
and
colored images
now
paled to paintless
these
symbols of salvation
tell tales
with
casts
of
cats and birds
of
biblical character
and
inspire
visions
free for the taking
from
century to century
as
sentry
for
the faithful followers

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South Central News

The South Central Shamrock Club had our Christmas Party on Dec. 10th.

On March 10, 2007 we will hold our Irish Man and Irish Rose of the Year Banquet at the Voyageur Inn and Conference Center in Reedsburg. The banquet starts at 5 p.m. Contact Dana at (608) 524-6821 if you wish to attend. Sean Michael Dargan, a delightful Irishman, will be our entertainment, on the bagpipes. Visit Sean at [www.seanmichaeldargan.com].

The Dates for The South Central Shamrock Club for 2007 are:

- Jan. 21, 2007 at Longley's Restaurant, Reedsburg, WI;
- Feb. 18 at Farm Kitchen, Baraboo, WI;
- March - No Meeting.
- April 15 Meeting at Longley's Restaurant, Reedsburg;
- May 20 Meeting at Farm Kitchen, Baraboo;
- June 10 Meeting Election of Officers, at Longley's Restaurant, Reedsburg;
- July and Aug. NO MEETINGS.
- Sept. 16 Meeting at Farm Kitchen, Baraboo.
- Oct. 21 Meeting at Longley's Restaurant, Reedsburg.
- Nov. 11 Meeting at Farm Kitchen, Baraboo.

We will be having guest speakers at the meetings to enrich our knowledge of Irish facts and humor. Stop in and enjoy the company and our celebration of Irish life.

Memberships are due Jan. 31, 2007, with checks payable to South Central Shamrock Club

c/o Dana Horkan-Gant
610 Vine Street
Reedsburg, WI 53959

Family membership dues are \$25. Single Membership dues are \$20. This includes the *Emerald Reflections* newsletter.

– Dana Horkan-Gant

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Shamrock Club of Rock County

UPCOMING EVENTS

• **MARCH 13** – St. Patrick’s Day Party at the Janesville Senior Center. We will keep you posted as the details fall into place.

The Shamrock Club was invited to represent Ireland at a Culture Fair at Aldrich School in Beloit, in November. Bob Burke, Eunice Harvey, Tom and Mary Kennedy were our representatives.

On their table, they had examples of Waterford Crystal, Belleek China, Carrigaline Pottery and hand knit clothing. There was also a display of old Irish coins including shillings, half crowns, three pence and half pence, along with several of the new Irish Euro coins. Many of the children were fascinated with the old coins and the funny names of those coins.

There were people from Hong Kong, China, Japan, Thailand, Scotland and Germany. The Native Americans and Black Americans were also represented. It was a wonderful evening. Everyone seemed so very friendly and having a good time.

In 2007, may you be blest with good health and happiness. Drive carefully and be very careful walking, because winter is here again.

Scribe,

– **Tom Kennedy**

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Milwaukee President’s Message

Welcome to January. Failte an Eanair. Tá fuair beagáinín géar san aer. There is a bit of a chill in the air, but that is to be expected. As the new year gives us a new start, it gives us new chances to look to make things better all across our lives. And I am not turning into Dr. Phil.

Our January 4 meeting will feature David Delgado, a Shamrock Club member who is the head of development at Mesmer High School. Dave is a top notch musician, and was one of the people that the Shamrock Club sent over to compete in the All Irelands many years ago. He will be talking about a number of different subjects.

We will be voting on the nominations submitted for Irishman of the Year, Irish Rose and Parade Marshal at the January board meeting. The meeting starts at 6 p.m., so you better write quickly, and get your choices in prior to the start of business that night. We

will present them at the February meeting, as well.

In 1948, Harry Truman was the first American president to attend the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City. And in 1999, the world's smallest St. Patrick's Day parade was held in Dripsey, Co. Cork. It was just 25 yards long and went from one pub to another. These are just reminders that the greatest St Patrick's Day Parade will be held in Milwaukee on March 10. For the past 42 years, we have been marching in honor of the Patron Saint of Ireland. Archbishop Timothy Dolan will celebrate our Mass, and the entertainment for the Post Parade Party is being lined up, as well. It will be a great day for the Irish in Wisconsin. Visit our parade page, at [<http://www.saintpatricksparade.org>] for updates.

I want to extend thanks to the heads of the recent events sponsored by the Shamrock Club. The Holiday Folk Fair was headed up by Cate Harris as general chair, Peter and Fran Dundon, food, Pam Canon, cultural, and Noreen Barclay, sales. I also want to say I am pleased by the announcement that Bridget Jaskulski will be taking over as dance school coordinator for the Folk Fair. This will reduce the amount of confusion regarding which dance schools are scheduled, and her experience will help in getting forms filled out, and music chosen. And the Christmas Party was a huge success, under the leadership of Kathy Donovan, and Dawn and Pete Fleming. Sue Suit and Kris Pluskota made certain things ran efficiently, as well. The abundance of food this year was amazing. Thanks also to the Irish Fest Choir, who did a whizbang job with the Christmas Carols.

As we have events, we have problems. At the Holiday Folk Fair, an outside vendor, Mystic Ireland, was given a place to sell merchandise. Complaints have been lodged with the International Institute, so far with no response. Our sales booth numbers were down this year by about \$1200. As this is one of our largest fundraisers, it did have a big impact on us. The Board voted to send a formal letter of protest to the IIW at the November meeting.

And our Christmas Party saw the modern age crash into our best laid plans. The Flemings email had crashed, and many of the reservations were lost. This year, the event was planned to have as many people register in advance, in order not to run out of food. I hope no one felt they were treated rudely or badly, but things do not always run as we see them. It was still a great night. It was also good to see so many new members attending.

The Color Guard is still in the process of raising money to get back to Savannah for St Patrick's Day. Their presence last year made them one of the most popular groups in attendance. They are having a number of fundraising events, so, if you can, help out.

I want to welcome back the folks from the South Central Chapter, who will be receiving Emerald Reflections again.

As the resolutions drop off during the course of the month, just remember that it is a year, and a new chance. Maybe time to learn

the bagpipes, or the Irish language. A prosperous New Year to you. Athbhliain faoi mhaise dhíbh.

– Brian Witt

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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

Baby, it's cold outside! Brrr! I don't know if one can ever get used to this Wisconsin weather.

Ahh, January. The holidays are over and it's back to school, work and for us, PRACTICE! We're again hard at work after a much deserved holiday break as we begin the countdown to our debut, St. Patrick's Day, 2007! Only 75 days and counting. Hee, Hee!

Many kudos to the band for their donations that were enough to feed nine families a full Thanksgiving Dinner with all the trimmings, plus enough left over for five large boxes full of food to stock the pantry's shelves.

Also, a huge thanks for the large turnout of band members who volunteered at the Holiday Folk Fair. We all had a blast and the scones were delicious!

A special thanks to all who played a favor to me for my friend's holiday party SWANK. It was a surprise to all involved when a pipe band shows up at a party. The host does something crazy every year, and trust me, they never expected us! Thank you to all ... you are the best.

The band also honored former member, Richard Stover, by playing a memorial service for his father at Old St. Mary's Church in early December. Richard, we're sorry for the loss of someone who was so important to you. Ar dheis De'go raibh a anam.

Asides:

•Welcome new drumline member, Patrick to the SCCGPD. We're happy to have ya'. Four snares, two tenors, and the all-important bass drum. A growing drum line indeed.

•Happy belated birthday to our fearless leader, Rich Pfeiffer. A good time was had by all at his surprise 50th party at the ICHC. You would have never guessed he was that old, would ya?

And lastly, a final note to all. The SCCGPD has come so far in the four short years that I have been with the group; from a few members to a whopping almost 50 and growing this present day.

We are family, brethren, and kindred friends with an interest in the same thing. I'm honored to know each and every one of you and excited for what 2007 has to offer our group. We've shown what hard work and dedication can bring. Slainte , everyone. Here's to us!!

I'll keep this month's article on the short side.

Until February, my sweethearts;

– Noel Tylla, 4th year piper

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Celtic Women First Fridays

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).

Date: Feb. 2, 2007 (Saint Brigid's Day)

Topic: "Brigid: Goddess, Saint ... and Spiritual Bridge"

Speaker: Jean-Andrew

The story of two women named Brigid/Brigid is intertwined in an intricate Celtic knot of myth and miracle. As both Celtic Goddess and Christian Saint they have personified the essential spiritual values of their eras... and today. The stories are blurred and obscured by time, selective fragments and re-interpretation. Jean-Andrew of STORYLORE will sort through fact, fiction, and treasured tales to spread a mantle of stories and images both ancient and new. Bring your own favorite image of Brigid/Brigid

to share. The first 30 people to attend will receive a hand-made straw St. Brigid's Cross.

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.

– Jean Bills

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22nd Annual Special Mass to Honor St. Patrick

Will be held prior to the St. Patrick's Day Parade

Saturday, MARCH 10, 2007 at 8:30 A.M.

at St. Patrick's Church

723 South 7th at Washington Street, Milwaukee

Sign reader for hearing impaired

Shuttle Bus: from ICHC rear parking lot (2133 W. Wisconsin Ave.) to St. Patrick's Church and after Mass return to Parade Route or parking lot for just \$3 per person. Bus to leave sharply at 7:45 A.M. for the Church

Tickets for bus can be purchased by mail or at the Shamrock Club February and March General Meetings

More information to follow about the Breakfast

For Bus reservations or information contact:

Chuck and Bonnie McLaughlin

12007 W. Walker Street, West Allis, WI 53214; Phone: (414)

771-0458

Send self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Make checks payable to Shamrock Club

Mail reservations for BUS ONLY

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone: _____

Number of Reservations _____ Amount

\$ _____

Bus Reservations will not be taken after March 3

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An Invitation To Shamrock Club Members

On Wednesday, January 24, the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center will be hosting its tenth annual business meeting. Since the Shamrock Club has established its home base at the Center, which is a focal point for the Irish community, all Shamrock Club members are cordially invited to attend the meeting. A light buffet supper will begin at 6 p.m. followed by a program which will conclude by 8 p.m.

This anniversary meeting is for you; please join us in celebration. Please call (414) 345-8800 to RSVP.

– **Jean Bill**

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Ceili for Peace

The 16th Annual Ceili for Peace will be held at the Irish Cultural Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Saturday, January 13, 2007. 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 7–7:30 p.m. After that, Irish jigs and reels will be taught by Ceili instructor Gail McElroy from 7:30–10:30 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 "House of Peace," a community center founded in 1968, that provides food, clothing, and pastoral care to the needy and to the poor plus houses both medical and legal clinics that serve the same population [www.houseofpeacemilwaukee.org]. For further information about the Ceili for Peace, please call Shamrock Club member Kristina Paris at (414) 372-3060 or

[www.ceolcairde.com].

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Member Doings

Natalie Slawinski and Mark Howard were recently married in Elkhart Lake.

David Delgado has been named development director at Messmer High School.

John Maher recently received the William O'Donnell Civic Achievement Award from the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Both Kris Carrig, ICHC director, and Rich Pfeiffer, director of the Color Guard Pipes and Drums, recently celebrated their 50th birthdays, only days apart.

Erin Canon placed 19th at the Mid-America Oireachtas! (Out of 117 dancers). Also, her ceili team tied for 2nd, and her choreography team placed first! She dances for Trinity.

Pat and Jane Fitzgibbons spent the Christmas holidays in Belfast.

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Sunshine Club

Pat McMahon, who portrayed St Patrick in our parades for many years, recently passed away. Longtime member Patricia O'Shea passed away in December, as well. Our condolences go out to their families.

If you have any information about members, please contact me with the information.

– Joe Donovan, (414) 259-8040

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Dance News

There will be two feisiana in Milwaukee in January. Both will be held at the Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee Airport, 4747 South Howell Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53207.

Wisconsin Winterfeis will take place on January 20, 2007. It is sponsored by Cashel Dennehy School Parent Booster Club.

The Irish Cultural and Heritage Center is proud to announce it will hold its first Feis on Sunday, January 21, 2007. The Feis commences at 8:30 a.m. (<http://www.ichc.net/feis/feis.html>).

In addition, Cashel Dennehy will be holding a fundraiser at the ICHC on January 12, from 6-10 p.m. Contact the ICHC at (414) 345-8800 for more information.

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Trip to Green Bay

The Shamrock Club activities committee is planning a trip to Green Bay to visit either the Packers Hall of Fame or the Oneida Casino in April. Dinner at St. Brendan's Irish Inn is planned. The cost is to be determined after the number of people is set, but at least 30 are needed to make it happen. For more information, contact Julie Smith, committee chair at (414) 384-4119, or by email at jesmith26@sbcglobal.net

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Holiday Folk Fair 2006

A big "thank you" to all of the volunteers who lent their time and talents to this year's Holiday Folk Fair. Shown below are but a few of the many!



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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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