



## Jan. 2008

### CONTENTS:

[The  
Resurrection  
Men](#)

[Milwaukee  
President's  
Message](#)

[Rock County  
Chapter  
Dissolves](#)

[South Central  
Shamrock Club  
News](#)

[A Humanitarian  
In Our Midst](#)

[Center for Celtic  
Studies Presents  
The Annual  
Sean N6s  
Weekend](#)

[The Music of the  
Shamrock Club](#)

[Nominations for  
Irish Honorees](#)

[Pat McCurdy to  
Headline](#)

[Sunshine Club](#)

[Members'  
Doings](#)

### INDEX

## The Resurrection Men

*by Brian Witt*

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were times of great advances in medicine, especially in the area of the human anatomy and how it worked. When doctors in the British Isles began to do experiments on the human body, they ran into a problem. Students of anatomy never had enough bodies to work on.

Thus began the process of procuring bodies for the medical school. People would often raid graves, and take the freshly buried to the schools often for five to ten pounds, depending on the condition of the corpses. Thus rose the term, "Resurrection Men". In the Grose Dictionary of Vulgar Tongue, the definition was "Persons employed by the students in anatomy to steal dead bodies out of church-yards". The freshly executed were fair game, and families often had to fight with these ghouls to recover their newly dead relatives. Body-snatching became so prevalent that it was not unusual for relatives and friends of someone who had just died to watch over the body until burial, and then to keep watch over the grave after burial, to stop it being violated. Iron coffins, too, were frequently used, or the graves were protected by a framework of iron bars called mortsafes. It was said that Robert Emmett's body met such a fate, being whisked over to Scotland after his death.

In the 1820s, two Irishmen who went to Scotland to find work found themselves in the body procurement trade. However, they went a bit further than their colleagues did. William Burke and William Hare met by happenstance. William Burke was born in Urney, County Tyrone. After trying his hand at a variety of trades there and serving as an officer's servant in the Donegal Militia, he left his wife and two children in Ireland and emigrated to Scotland about 1817, working as a navvy for the Union Canal. He acquired a mistress, Helen MacDougal, and afterwards worked as a laborer, weaver, baker and lastly a cobbler. By 1827 he was living in a lodging-house in Edinburgh, in Tanners Close, West Port, run

[SHAMROCK CLUB HOME](#)

[EMERALD REFLECTIONS  
ONLINE NEWSLETTER](#)

[PHOTO OF THE MONTH](#)

[MILWAUKEE CALENDAR](#)

[WISCONSIN CALENDAR](#)

[MIDWEST CALENDAR](#)

[JOIN CLUB](#)

[MILWAUKEE MARCH  
ST. PATRICK'S  
DAY EVENTS](#)

[MILWAUKEE CHAPTER](#)

[STATE CHAPTERS](#)

[COLOR GUARD](#)

[GIFT CENTER](#)

[LINKS OF  
IRISH INTEREST](#)

[VENUES](#)

[Sign My Guestbook](#)



[View My Guestbook](#)



Email:  
[Shamrock Club](#)

[Welcome New Members](#)

[Milwaukee Calendar of Events](#)

[Wisconsin Calendar of Events](#)

by William Hare, another Irish laborer, and Maggie Laird, the widow of another Irish immigrant named Logue. Hare's birthplace is uncertain, being variously given as Newry or Derry. Hare emigrated to Scotland and also worked as a laborer on the Union Canal.

The business of supplying corpses started when Hare was left with a lodger who had run up large debts and then had the temerity to die. They arranged a funeral, but buried the coffin after filling it with tan bark, and then sold the body to the medical school at the University of Edinburgh. The body fetched seven pounds ten shillings, and the pair realized this could be a profitable enterprise. The first murder was that of a woman wandering drunk in the streets, who was brought to the house and suffocated. The victim garnered ten pounds, and a deal was set that they would get eight pounds in the summer and ten in the winter. Thus set off a streak of serial killing that shocked all of the British Isles. In all, seventeen people were known to have met their end in the boarding house, mostly by suffocation.

The murderers supplied corpses to, among others, Robert Knox, a celebrated anatomist and the most popular lecturer at the city's Medical School, who attracted as many as 500 students per class. Experts believe that Knox must have known that the corpses he was receiving had met a sticky end, but that he turned a blind eye. One person noted, "If Knox was as brilliant an anatomist as everybody said, he should have had some knowledge that these bodies had been killed."

Burke and Hare would prey on the Irish immigrant community oftener than not. They also killed a number of prostitutes, and also Ann McDougal, the sister of Burke's companion, Helen. The duo was caught when their last victim, a Mrs. Mary Docherty, or Campbell, from Tyrone, was discovered laying under a bed of straw by two others who lived in the house. Burke had enticed her to the home with drink and by telling her she was related to him. Even though the pair managed to get the body to the school it was discovered there and identified by a couple who knew her.

After they were arrested, the police spent months in trying to put together a case linking them to the murders. Hare was offered immunity from prosecution if he confessed and agreed to testify against Burke. Hare confessed to the murders, and gave evidence against Burke in return for his freedom. He also provided details on seventeen killings. (There were estimates that upwards of thirty were killed.) As a result, Burke was executed by hanging on January 29, 1829, an event that attracted 25,000 spectators. Knox was acquitted of charges, and eventually left Edinburgh for London. Hare left to parts unknown, either back to Ireland, or to the streets of London, where he worked as a beggar. Margaret fled back to Ireland, and Helen booked passage to Australia, where she died in 1868.

Burke's body was taken from the gallows to the University, where

it was then dissected. A discussion was held about the density of his brain. Mobs in the street wanted to see his corpse, and finally police allowed them into the lab, at a rate of sixty per minute, to see the feared killer.

Literature of the day was fascinated by the case, and of the other resurrection men. Jerry Cruncher, a character from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, works at night as a resurrection man. A famous literary depiction of the practice is the short story, *The Body Snatcher* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* also played upon those fears. And Burke added to the lexicon of the empire. His method of killing his victims brought forth the verb burking.

William Burke lives on to this day, in a manner of speaking. The Anatomy Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh holds Burke's death mask and a wallet allegedly made of his skin. His skeleton is on display within the medical school. The Police Information office on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh located just a few yards from where Burke was hanged, also houses a business card case made from his skin. Thus was a macabre end to a gruesome killing streak.

## INDEX

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### **Milwaukee President's Message**

Athbhliain faoi mhaise dhíbh. A prosperous New Year to you. Ah, January. Start of the year. New year, new hopes. Old concerns, new concerns. Life is a continuum.

This month, we will be voting on our Irish Rose, Irishman of the Year and Parade Marshal. Get your nominations in to us before the start of business at the January 31 board meeting. That meeting starts at 6 p.m., so if you are on the agenda, please be there before the voting starts. Once we conclude the general business, no one will be allowed into the room until we complete the process. Just check the chimney at the ICHC about 8 or so for white smoke. E-mail your nominations to me at [briangwitt@shamrockclubwis.com], fax them to the ICHC at (414) 345-8805, or drop them off at the ICHC.

The parade is coming. We will be doing this on March 8. And on March 15 is our Mass in Honor of St. Patrick—our 23rd. Both events commemorate our history, and we have had a glorious past. Our parade is the largest parade of any kind in the State of Wisconsin.

Thanks again to all who made our participation in the Holiday Folk Fair a success. An omission that was due to publication time was

for the Cultural booth. Heather Majusiak helped to coordinate the weekend, along with Pam Canon and Marianne Fisher. It was a good year overall for us at the event.

The Color Guard Pipes and Drums will be having a fund raiser on January 27 at the ICHC. It will feature them and a closing act by the name of Pat McCurdy. The night starts at 6 p.m. Please come out and support us in this event.

The Milwaukee chapter was awash in spreading holiday cheer in the way of Christmas trees. We decorated the Irish tree for Folk Fair, for Christmas at the Mitchell Park Domes, and for the Governor's mansion in Madison. Pictures of them will be published soon.

The Christmas Party was a success, as well. Thanks to Malkin Wallace and Mary Culver for the planning and setup, Stacy Gleeson and Sue Suit for the decorating, Pasty Grimes for the tables, the Irish Fest Choir for the carols, Emmett Jordan for the musical prelude, Dan Vircks for the slideshow of Ireland, and Santa Claus and Mrs.. Tree for the entertainment value.

We received notice that the Rock County chapter has dissolved its corporation. They will be missed. They were a strong and long time chapter for many years.

Again, Happy New Year 2008. See you for Imbolg on February 1.

– **Brian Witt Briangwitt@shamrockclubwis.com**

[INDEX](#)

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## **Rock County Chapter Dissolves**

The Rock County chapter has officially dissolved. They notified the State of Wisconsin that they were ending their corporation. All funds of their chapter were used to pay outstanding bills and the rest were donated to three charitable organizations: the Salvation Army, St. Elizabeth's Home and HealthNet, a medical facility for the poor. All three are based in Janesville.

The reasons for dissolution were the loss of membership by the group, and the inability to attract new members. Notice was sent to the State chapter on November 21, 2007.

[INDEX](#)

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## South Central Shamrock Club News

The Christmas season of eggnog and celebrating Jesus birthday has passed and the New Year looks to be promising and filled with new resolutions. My hope is to keep our South Central Shamrock Club membership strong. This leads me to say "Time For Renewal Of Membership"! The dues are the same as 2007: \$20 for Single; \$25 for Family. Both memberships include this wonderful newsletter you are reading now. Membership deadline is January 31st. Checks payable to: South Central Shamrock Club. Mail to: Dana Horkan-Gant; 610 Vine Street; Reedsburg, WI 53959.

A bit of history I found online about the "Origin of the Rosary" ...

Theologians have traced the origin of the Rosary back to the Ninth century as a form of prayer that evolved in the monasteries of the early Irish church. Prayer and labor filled the days of the Irish monks, and one of the most important forms of monastic prayer was the daily chanting of the 150 psalms of David. Lay people around the monastery would hear the psalms every day as they were sung or recited, and the beauty of this form of prayer intrigued them. They yearned to join in, but the psalms were too long to memorize, copies could not be found since printing was rare, and few knew how to read Latin anyway. The lay people were however, determined to adapt this prayer form for their own use. Sometime around 800 AD, the people's desire to participate led to their reciting The Lord's Prayer in response to every psalm recited by the monks. As this form of devotion became popular, people began to carry leather pouches of 150 pebbles, in order that they might keep count of their daily prayers when they were not in hearing distance of the monastery. A thin rope with 150 knots became less of a burden and soon replaced the bag of stones.

The Celtic infatuation with the number three, soon saw the prayer rope evolve into a rope of 50 knots to be said three times, and this became an accepted standard. When the Irish missionary monks began to travel and evangelize Europe, this form of devotion was brought with them. In some areas, clergy and lay people began to recite the Angelic Salutation which makes up the first part of the Hail Mary in response to the psalms.

St. Peter Damien, who died in 1072, was the first to mention this form of prayer, the popularity of which led to the daily recitation of 50 Angelic Salutations on a knotted or beaded prayer string.

During the 13th century, the recitation evolved into yet another form. Medieval theologians began to interpret the 150 psalms as veiled prophecies about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and they composed a series of Psalters, or praises, based on each interpretation. Soon 150 Psalters in honor of Mary were also composed. In order to fit the existing prayer string, the Psalters

were divided into three “rosariums” or bouquets of 50 each. This was the form that St. Dominic knew, and promoted.

With the Church’s emphasis on unity, it was inevitable that a planned combination of all the prayer forms was prescribed as a standard. The first step toward that standard took place about 1365 when Henry of Kalkar, Visitor of the Carthusian Order, divided the 150 salutations into decades of 10, with an Our Father preceding each. Around 1409, another Carthusian named Dominic the Prussian, wrote a book which attached a Psalter of 50 thoughts, about the lives of Jesus and Mary, to a Rosarium of 50 Hail Marys. The division of the 50 Hail Marys into five groups of ten, or decades, with an Our Father before each, gave the modern Rosary its form, yet the evolution was not over.

In 1470, the Dominican, Alan of Rupe, founded the first Rosary Confraternity, thereby establishing the Dominican Order as the foremost missionaries of the Rosary. Then, during the Renaissance, the medieval form of a thought for each bead was abandoned in favor of a shorter version with a thought for each of the fifteen decades. These thoughts took the form of narratives, one of the most popular sets of which was written by St. Louis de Montfort around 1700. The fifteen narratives were divided into five Joyful, five Sorrowful, and five Glorious Mysteries in the lives of Jesus and Mary, and the Rosary itself became a string of 50 beads to be prayed three times, with each time representing one of the three sets of Mysteries.

In spite of centuries of evolution and change, the Rosary’s Irish origins are still evident. The number of Hail Marys in the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries still total 150 – the exact number of psalms chanted by the early Irish monks in their monasteries, and answered by the faithful Irish outside in a responsorial pattern that became today’s most popular form of devotion. It is significant that when Mary visited Knock in 1879, she was holding a Rosary.

Member Sheila Roznos spent three weeks in Ireland and England with six friends back in August. Sheila so graciously shared her story with all of us at our November meeting. Sheila planned the entire trip (helpful that this was her fourth time visiting) but still a huge undertaking and the best part was she had the pleasure of meeting a distant relative, Father Hayes, in the southwestern part of Ireland which to Sheila was the highlight of her trip and a treat for all of us to hear about. Thanks, Sheila!

I know the presents have been unwrapped but if you love to play trivia, a great trivia quiz card game is called “So you think you know” ...IRELAND. It requires two to ten players and is a wonderful tool to educate yourself and others with a pint to share on these cold nights ahead of us. John Delmore shared this card game with us and it really is a fun way of learning about Ireland.

A simple recipe to try:

## **COTTAGE PIE**

2 lbs ground beef  
1 tablespoon oil  
2 onions (finely chopped)  
2 tomatoes (chopped)  
1 cup beef stock or bouillon  
1/2 teaspoon thyme  
1/4 teaspoon sage  
1 tablespoon chopped parsley  
5 medium potatoes (boiled and mashed)  
1/2 tsp thyme  
1 tablespoon butter or bacon fat  
salt and pepper

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Brown the beef in oil. Remove from pan and set aside. Drain most of the accumulated fat from the pan. Sauté onions until tender, and then add chopped tomatoes and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add broth and stir in herbs and seasonings. Return brown meat to skillet and continue cooking for 5 minutes. Transfer all ingredients to an ovenproof casserole. Top with mashed potatoes (scoring them with a fork.) Dot with butter and bake uncovered in 375-degree oven for 30-40 minutes.

Next meeting is January 20 at Longley's Restaurant in Reedsburg, WI at 4 p.m.

Happy New Year!

– **Dana Horkan Gant South Central Membership  
Chairperson**

## **INDEX**

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## **A Humanitarian In Our Midst**

### **Celtic Woman Lecturer January**

Jeanne McCue will be the speaker on January 4, 2008 at the Celtic Women First Friday Lecture Series, 5:30-7 p.m. at the ICHC. She is a very special Irish woman indeed.

In 1973 the Shamrock Club honored their very first Irish Rose; it was Jeanne McCue of Whitefish Bay. Since that time, Jeanne has set out on a course that is almost saintly. She recently completed her 31st mission to Bosnia, where she brings medical, school, dental and home supplies to the people of Bosnia. Jeanne works as a nurse at Froedtert Hospital where she is able to maintain contacts to obtain donations of many of the items.

A listing of the recipients of her generosity is mind-boggling. Such

as Egipat Children's Home, an orphanage for 60 children of all nationalities. Diabetic Children in Zavidovici, where children ages 5-16 are all insulin-dependent. Njega Hospice, the first such place in Bosnia, it received manuals to help teach hospice nursing in Bosnia; Bread of St. Anthony, for handicapped children with special needs and the elderly without income or pensions who receive soup and bread, school supplies, quilts and Christmas gifts; Goat Program (Catholic Croatian Charities) which has bought and distributed 40 goats for poor families; the goats will provide both food and income for their family.

Join the Celtic Women January 4th to hear from Jeanne about her Bosnian adventures. Admission \$7, tea and cookies served. Everyone welcome.

– **Jean Bills**

[INDEX](#)

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**Center for Celtic Studies  
Presents The Annual  
Sean N6s Weekend**



Mark your calendars now for our annual Sean Nós weekend, coming up the weekend of February 15–17, 2008. Join us for friendly workshops in traditional song and dance. Attend Irish language immersion classes for everyone from absolute beginners to Lúofóirí. Take in the American premier of *Seachd*, the new Gaelic language feature film. Enjoy and take part in concerts and sessions. Our special guest will be Danny Cassidy speaking on his new best-selling book, “How the Irish Invented Slang: The Secret Language of the Crossroads”. Bílín! Join us for a convivial cultural weekend that is unique in North America. Special room rates available at the County Clare Irish Inn.

Fáilte Romhat! Looking for something to pass the time on those long winter evenings? Why not select a delightful course from our spring listings! Auditors over 60 are free and warmly welcomed! The spring schedule is as follows:

### **CELTIC**

- Celtic 104: Second Semester Gaelic, TR 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m., Bairbre Ní Chiardha
- Celtic 204: Fourth Semester Gaelic, MW 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Seosai Nic Rabhartaigh
- Celtic 250-001: The Green Screen: Images of Ireland in Film, W 6 p.m. – 8:45 p.m., John Gleeson
- Celtic 250-002: Celtic Religion and Neo-Paganism, M 5 p.m. – 7:40 p.m., James Lewis
- Celtic 250-003: Women in the Celtic World, T 5:30 p.m. – 8:10 p.m., Christine Hamlin
- Celtic 297 & 497: Study Abroad in Colmcille, Ireland, Semester Program

- Celtic 350: Ireland in the 20th Century, R 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m., John Gleeson

### **ENGLISH**

- English 192-002: Celtic Folk and Fairy Tales, MW 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Nancy Walczyk
- English 306: Survey in Irish Literature, TR 3:30 p.m. – 6:10 p.m., Josepha Lanfers

### **HISTORY**

- Hist 236: Britain Since 1688: Rise and Decline of a Great Power, TR 8 a.m. – 9:15 a.m., Timothy Crain

### [INDEX](#)

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## **The Music of the Shamrock Club**

Want to hear some great Irish music, and support Shamrock Club members? Here is a list of a number of members playing in the Milwaukee area.

- **Bill and Lin O'Connor of Theiss and O'Connor.** Playing at Martha Merrell's Books and Café, 231 W. Main Street, Waukesha, on January 11 and February 8. at 6:30 p.m. (262) 547-1060 for info.

- **Michael Tierney with the Tinker Boys and solo.** Playing January 10, at Wells Street Tavern, 505 W Wells St, Delafield, 7 p.m.; January 11 at the House of Guinness, 324 W. Main Street, Waukesha, 9:30 p.m.; January 17 at County Clare, 10 p.m.; January 24 at House of Guinness, 8:30 p.m.; January 31 at Stone Bank Pub, N67 W33395 Co. Rd. K, Oconomowoc, 7:30 p.m., and February 9, at County Clare, 10 p.m.

- **Kristina Paris and Ceol Cairde.** Playing January 19 at ICHC ceili dance. 7:30 p.m.; February 9 at Ceili for Peace annual benefit, this year's proceeds to Casa Maria Hospitality House and W.A.V.E., Wisconsin Anti Violence Effort, 7 p.m., Mini concert of Irish music 7:30–10:30 p.m. Ceili Dancing, with instruction; ICHC.

Tell them you are Shamrock Club members if you stop in.

### [INDEX](#)

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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.

[INDEX](#)

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## Pat McCurdy to Headline

### Color Guard Pipes and Drums Fundraiser January 27

On Sunday, January 27, 2008, The Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums will be holding a fundraiser at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue. The headliner will be Milwaukee musician Pat McCurdy. There will also be a set by the Shamrock Color Guard Pipes and Drums.

Tickets are \$9 and can be purchased at the ICHC. The bar will be open and I.D. carding will be enforced. The doors will open at 6 p.m. The show starts at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Rich Pfeiffer at (414) 759-9562 or [richard-pfeiffer@sbcglobal.net].

[INDEX](#)

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## Sunshine Club

Faith O'Connell recently had knee surgery.

Patrick Regan, the father of Erin Fadeski and Denis Regan, died recently. We express our condolences to the family.

If you have any information about members, please contact me, Joe Donovan, (414) 259-8040.

[INDEX](#)

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## **Members' Doings**

Tom O'Connell and Russ and Kathy Schultz were among Shamrock Club members who attended the Celtic Colours festival on Cape Breton Island, Nova. Michael Tierney spent a part of December touring Europe with his band Beatallica. Marianne and Jeff Fisher spent the Christmas holidays in the Twin Cities.

[INDEX](#)

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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 – Julie Pruske, Ryan Witt.

[INDEX](#)