

December 2005
Mi Na Nollaig

Member Tel: (305) 949-8400
www.emeraldsocietySFL.com

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Cameron (305) 232-2015

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Editors

Mary Ann &

Oliver Kerr

305-251-6208

Season's Greetings! Beannachtáí na Féile duit!

A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all Emeralds and to your families and friends! There is no holiday more loved or more celebrated in Ireland. The Christmas festivities last for three full days - from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day through the end of St. Stephens Day / Boxing Day on the 26th! Each day is filled with so much celebration, holiday cheer, and good food that it may take a few more days to recover from it all.

We also send warm greetings and best wishes for the New Year to our members who are not Christian.

Christmas in Ireland Celebration

What a wonderful celebration of Christmas in Ireland at the Coral Gables Country Club on Thursday, December 8, 2005! Two hundred Emeralds and friends, a sell-out crowd, trooped into the Club ready for a wonderful evening. And they got it! Tricianne Garrihy and The Sounds of Avalon played and sang and we danced the night away. Dan Fitzgerald was brilliant as our master of ceremonies and regaled us with some familiar old Irish songs. The Irish step dancers from Ft. Lauderdale added an extra sparkle to the evening. Karen Dunn piped us in and Oliver Kerr opened the evening with an eloquent invocation. The food was great and spirits were high.

Congratulations to our raffle prize winners. Virginia Lazzo, Pat Novak's office receptionist, walked away with a cool \$1,000. Bob Meyer won the four-night cruise for two in the owner's suite of the Carnival Fantasy. "Burger Bob," also know as Bob Hogan won the two round-trip tickets on Cayman Airways. Congratulations, all!

Thanks to Mary Ann Kerr, Judi Sherry, Jan Paris, and Janice McKay for helping with the decorations and the reception desk. Thanks to Helen Lennon, Tom Lynch and Anne McShane for helping with the raffle tickets. We still missed our veteran ticket seller, Marge Hartnett, who was home recovering from a broken hip.

Finally, a big thank you to our chairman, Patrick Novak and his significant other, Joyce Alarcon. His leadership and energy brought us a memorable evening.

Board Meeting

The January Board meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 5, 2006 at the Miami Yacht Club. Attendance of all Board members is expected and members are welcome to attend.

Health and Welfare

Our prayers and best wishes for a speedy recovery go out to our Treasurer, **Dave Russell**, who has been ill and to **Marge Hartnett**, who fractured her hip. Both are progressing well and we look forward to their return as fully active members soon.

C.L. Conroy's mother was in the hospital recently but is now back home and recovering well.

Desiree Meyer, Bob Meyer's wife, was in a serious accident in Turkey while on a family vacation there during the summer. Happily, she too is recovering well and we hope and pray that she too will fully recover.

On a brighter note, **Sean Hayden and his wife** are now the parents of newly born twins. It will be a busy but happy Christmas in the Hayden house this year. Congratulations!

Finally, long-time member **Jim Cooney** is leaving Miami. He received a little token of appreciation from the Emeralds at the Christmas in Ireland celebration.

Did you lose a ring at the Christmas in Ireland party?

An unusual ring was found at the Coral Gables Country Club just after our annual celebration there. Please contact the editors, 305-251-6208, with a description of the item, if you think that it might be yours.

Trip to Ireland this summer?

The Church of the Little Flower invites you to join a 10-day Choir Pilgrimage of Music and Prayer, "Ireland Celtic Spirituality, Heart and Soul," from June 5 to 14, 2006. Contact Ms. Dawn Fontana, Director of Music at the Church, or Peter's Way Tours, Inc., 1-800-225-7662.

The "We Love Kids" Party

The "We Love Kids" Party is tomorrow, Sunday, Sunday, December 18, 2006 in South Miami-Dade. We apologize for the late notice to those of you receiving this via regular mail. Maurice Grondin and his helpers could use more volunteers. Why not call him now while you are reading this emailed version. He can be reached at 305-858-1299 or 305-592-7090.

The St. Patrick's Day Committee, Inc.

The St. Patrick's Day Committee is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization affiliated with the South Florida Emerald Society, which, in turn, is a 501 (c) 7 organization in the IRS code. We are devoting a separate section of the newsletter to the activities conducted under the umbrella of this Committee. We have received a grant from the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Committee to help us conduct the St. Patrick's Day festival on March 11, 2006.

St. Patrick's Day Festival

Michael O'Connor, former President of the South Florida Emerald Society, Inc., has volunteered to chair the event again this year. The planning meetings are at the offices of C. L. Conroy, 2121 Ponce de Leon in the Gables. All members are invited and encouraged to attend. Volunteers are needed in all areas, e.g. information booth, Tinker's Booth, Soda Bread booth, festival setup, children's activities, etc. Each Emerald should solicit an ad for the festival booklet now. You can download a form from the website. This is an important part of running a successful festival. For more information call 305-445-7550.

The Celtic Cultural Series Sixth Season

The Cultural Series inaugurated its sixth season last month on the day before Halloween with a musical presentation of the Christianization of an ancient Irish tradition at the onset of winter, ***Oidche Samhain***, the night of Samhain, the beginning of the season of long, dark nights

In November The Celtic Cultural Series welcomed J. B. Hourihan, oldest living Emerald Society President, to the Historical Museum for a review of his new book, *My Daddy Made the Sidewalks*, at the Historical Museum last month. There were several green jackets in the crowd that warmly greeted J. B. and his son. The book tells the story of daily life in Miami's infancy when the city was just beginning to grow. Copies of the book are available at the Historical Museum bookstore for about \$20. A last minute Christmas gift? Call 305-375-1492 or check out www.historical-museum.org.

The Wren Boys in January.

Mark you calendars now for the next fun session of the Celtic Cultural Series. The Kerr brothers, Dan Fitzgerald, and others will treat you to a musical session on the Wren Boys at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 8, at John Martins on Miracle Mile.

It's an old Irish tradition, recently revived, for the Wren Boys to go out on St. Stephen's Day (the day after Christmas) to hunt for the wren. St. Stephen's Day honors the first Christian martyr. The legend of the wren is that St. Stephen hid in some bushes outside Jerusalem to escape from a crowd intent on killing him. A chattering wren revealed his hiding place and he was dragged out and stoned to death. The wren, like St. Stephen, should be hunted down and stoned to death.

Groups of small boys would paint their faces, wear old, crazy clothes and hats, and with musicians move from house to house, or pub to pub, collecting money to bury the bird. They were usually treated to food and drink and the money collected would be used for a day's end party for all who had joined them during the course of the day. The tradition is probably a pre-Christian one but has been Christianized over time. It was not particularly encouraged by the clergy who generally frowned on a day and evening of drinking and carousing.

Today, no birds are killed although January is prime hunting season in the Irish countryside. Instead, groups of adults will dress sometimes like mummers and with musicians go from pub to pub performing and collecting money for a charity. It has become better organized and more popular in

recent years. One traditional song, which we will sing for you is as follows:

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
On St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze,
Although he is little, his family is great,
I pray you, good landlady, give us a treat.

My box would speak, if it had but a tongue,
And two or three shillings, would do it not wrong,
Sing holly, sing ivy--sing ivy, sing holly,
A drop just to drink, it would drown melancholy.

And if you draw it of the best,
I hope in heaven your soul will rest;
But if you draw it of the small,
It won't agree with these wren boys at all.

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Here are some pictures from our Christmas in Ireland celebration.





The South Florida Emerald Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 144844
Coral Gables, FL. 33134.