

January 2006
Mi Eanair

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A Happy New Year to All Emeralds!

A happy New Year to all Emeralds and to your families and friends! Goodbye to 2005 with its storms, traffic congestion, and record high housing prices. May 2006 be a year of peace, fair winds, and prosperity for all of us!

Note the Celtic Cultural Series meeting on Sunday, January 8, upstairs at John Martins Irish Pub and Restaurant, 253 Miracle Mile, in Coral Gables. Oliver and Dr. Jim Kerr with assistance from Dan Fitzgerald and some other good voices will talk and sing about the revival of the traditional Christmas Wren Boy customs in Ireland in recent years. We promise you a few surprises. See additional details inside.

In February, join us to make your very own St. Brigid's cross.

Christmas in Ireland Celebration

Did you like the pictures of the Christmas in Ireland Celebration we posted in last month's newsletter? Do you think that we should add pictures to our newsletter on a regular basis? We would like to know if you email readers had trouble opening or viewing the pictures. If you got a paper copy of the newsletter how did you feel about the quality of the black and white photos? We'd love to hear from you. Why not email or call us?

The First Social of 2006 Returns to the Tuscany

The first social of the New Year will be on Thursday, January 26 at the Tuscany restaurant in Coconut Grove, just a few blocks from the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Bill O'Brien assures us of yet another night of dining, dancing to live music (Joe Donato and company) and enjoying each other's company. Come and meet old friends and help us welcome new members. We gather at 6:30.

If you have not been going to the monthly social it's time now to make a New Year's resolution: shake a leg, get out of the house, and join your fellow Emeralds for a fun-filled evening. The Tuscany is at 3484 Main Highway in Coconut Grove. Telephone 305-445-0022.

Board Meeting

The January Board meeting was held January 5, 2006 at the Miami Yacht Club. The February meeting will be at the same location on Thursday, February 2, 2006. Attendance of all Board members is expected and members are welcome to attend.

New Members

Join us in extending a *cead mile failte*, a hundred, thousand welcomes, to our new members.

- Barbara W. Amazon, sponsored by Carroll Cameron
- Robert DeWitt, sponsored by Don Slesnick.
- Patricia Gamble, sponsored by Maurice Grondin
- Robert McGee, sponsored by Oliver Kerr
- Patricia O'Regan Rios, sponsored by Mary Ann Kerr, and
- Francis J. Ormond, sponsored by Janice McKay.

We hope that you join us in extending a warm Irish welcome to these sparkling new Emeralds at the February social.

Poetry Corner

Each month the Shamrock News presents a poem by an Irish poet. This month we bring you the oldest Irish poem we know. It is a translation of a poem in Gaelic written in the eighth or ninth centuries and found in the margins of a manuscript in a monastery in Carinthia, Switzerland, which was founded in 1091. The monastery of St. Paul had an extensive collection of manuscripts.

Pangur Ban means "white Pangur." (*Ban* is pronounced as Bonn.)

The translation is by Dr. Robin Flower, a Gaelic scholar, who lived with a small Gaelic-speaking community on Great Blasket Island, one of several small, now uninhabited, islands off the southwest coast of Ireland. His translation catches the flow and the rhythm of the original. And all you cat lovers out there will certainly appreciate these sentiments.

Pangur Ban

I and Pangur Ban, my cat,
'Tis a like task we are at;
Hunting mice is his delight,
Hunting words I sit all night.

Better far than praise of men
'Tis to sit with book and pen;
Pangur bears me no ill will;
He, too, plies his simple skill.

'Tis a merry thing to see
At our task how glad are we,
When at home we sit and find
Entertainment to our mind.

Oftentimes a mouse will stray
Into the hero Pangur's way;
Oftentimes my keen thought set
Takes a meaning in its net.

'Gainst the wall he sets his eye
Full and fierce and sharp and sly;
'Gainst the wall of knowledge I
All my little wisdom try.

When a mouse darts from its den.
O how glad is Pangur then!
O what gladness do I prove
When I solve the doubts I love!

So in peace our tasks we ply,
Pangur Ban, my cat and I;
In our arts we find our bliss,
I have mine, and he has his.

Practice every day has made
Pangur perfect in his trade;

I get wisdom day and night,
Turning Darkness into light.

Reception for Ambassador John Bruton

You are invited to a reception for Ambassador John Bruton, European Union ambassador to the United States and former prime minister of Ireland at the Coral Gables Country Club on Wednesday, January 25, 2006 from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. The reception will include an open bar and an auction. A \$50 donation is requested. The proceeds are to support the building of a new center for the Irish Peace Institute at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Members of the diplomatic corps and local dignitaries will be in attendance. RSVP to Kathleen Foley Schmach, 4775 Collins Ave, Suite 3204, Miami Beach, FL. 33140. Tel: 205-532-8363. Email: kathleen.schmacht@ul.ie.

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. Weekly meetings will be held. 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. You can download a form from the website. This is an important part of running a successful festival.

Each Emerald should solicit an ad for the festival booklet now. Camera-ready ads that are

submitted and paid for by January 31 will receive a 5 percent discount.
For more information call 305-445-7550.

The Celtic Cultural Series Sixth Season

The Cultural Series is in its sixth season of presenting Celtic Cultural Programs in Miami-Dade County. Founded by Edward Cooke, a past-president of the South Florida Emerald Society, Inc., it is now directed by member Joseph McManus with the assistance of his wife Barbara.

We call your attention to the little lending library that the Series maintains upstairs at John Martins. There are books and other materials there that members can borrow while attending one of our Sunday sessions. Check it out. It operates on the honor system.

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 no
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.

stage and in television he accepted a “temporary” ten-year position in retailing public relations.

This led to his opening his own fashion promotion agency, gradually segueing back to his acting roots. Since then he has appeared in 39 feature films and over 200 commercials. Did you see him with Cameron Diaz and Shirley McLaine in “In Her Shoes”?

On Sunday, January 22, 2006 he will appear at a book-signing party introducing his memoir, “Stars in My Eyes.” This is your personal invitation to visit the Alley Hair Studio, 214 Miracle Mile, in the walk-through arcade directly across the street from John Martins. Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served.

Dan asserts that his tome (\$15.99) contains most, but not all, of the “warts,” along with his experiences with over 100 celebrities. It’s a great read, a wonderful bedside book. Come on out and get your copy and maybe a copy for a friend.

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

Dan Fitzgerald book signing

Two-time past Emerald president, Dan Fitzgerald was a Depression baby who overlapped a six-and-a-half year army career with a four-year stint as a night-club performer. After four more years on