

January 2007

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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 2006 with its increased traffic congestion and record high housing prices. May the New Year be a year of peace, fair winds, and happiness for all of us and for our troubled world! And may we remain free from hurricanes and other storms.

Note the Celtic Cultural Series meeting on Sunday, January 14, 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.

On February 11, join us to make your very own St. Brigid's cross. Your editors did some fieldwork on this project at St. Brigid's birthplace in Ireland this past summer and we will surely have some fun.

Another Great Christmas Time in Ireland Dinner

Once again we joined in merry fellowship for a festive dinner and dance at the beautiful Coral Gables Country Club. Our party hats are off to Patrick Novak and his group of Christmas elves who worked hard to present us with a truly memorable dinner and dance. Special thanks go to Mary Ann Kerr and Judi Sherry for the poinsettias on the tables. Thanks also to Jan Paris, Helen Lennon, Marge Hartnett, Pat Rios, Tom Lynch and Tom and Karen Dunn for helping. The Breffni dancers sparkled and drew standing applause from all who were privileged to see them perform. And they were followed by some fairly talented, if somewhat older, Emeralds who showed that they could still move gracefully with the music. The music by Celt was great and many crowded the dance floor. Dan Fitzgerald entertained with some sweet old songs at the beginning of the evening and continued to serve as master of ceremonies until the final jig was danced and tired feet turned homeward. Thanks to all who helped make this an evening to remember.

The First Social of the Year is at Ann McShane's Home

The January Social is at Ann McShane's beautiful ranch in the Redland farming area on Friday, January 26, at 6:30 p.m. The last home social at Serre Murphy's place was such a success we wanted to try again at a member's home. Ann's address is 16250 SW 272 Street. Coming south on US 1, turn right at the light at 272 Street, and go west approximately two miles. After the second stop sign (162 Avenue or Farm Life School Road), look for the house on the left hand corner of the next block. Car-pool if you can. Ann would appreciate any hors d'oeuvres or covered dishes you would like to bring, but please call (305-246-9922) or email (redlandann@aol.com) her by Wednesday, January 24 so that she can be prepared.

Ann's brother, an accomplished Irish musician and entertainer, will be visiting then and it promises to be a wonderful evening under the stars.

Bill O'Brien organizes the monthly socials and could use some help in scheduling and negotiating future sites. Interested? Call Joe McManus at 305-375-4907.

Board Meeting

The January Board meeting was held on January 4. Minutes of the meeting are posted on the web site so that you can view the complete record of what was done. The annual audit committee is being formed and could use some help.

The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 1, 2007 at the Miami Yacht Club on Watson Island just east of Parrott Jungle. Attendance of all Board members is expected and members are welcome to attend. Just identify yourself as an Emerald Society member at the gate speaker box.

Welcome New Members

Approved at the December board meeting were:

- Hadley Williams, Coconut Grove, sponsored by Jan Paris.

- Jon B. Lindeman, Jr., Esq., Miami Gardens, sponsored by Jon Lindeman, Sr.
- Melissa T. Sullivan, South Miami, sponsored by Jon Lindeman.

Join us in extending a warm welcome to them and come meet them in person at the next Social.

Emerald Friends Passing

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of former Emerald Society member John Wrisk, who passed away recently. We also extend our sympathy to Chris Kelley and his family on the death of his sister, Carol. May they rest in peace.

Audit Committee Volunteers Needed

John Doherty, our dedicated and meticulous treasurer, is seeking volunteers to form an audit committee to review the accounts of the Society. If you have some accounting skills, CPA or Certified Financial Analyst, please call Joe McManus (305-375-4907).

Elections Committee Appointed

The 2007 Elections Committee consisting of Carroll Cameron, Tom Dunn, and Joe McManus (Chair) are accepting nominations for the Board of Directors until February 1. There will be some vacancies so consider a nomination to serve on the board. The monthly meetings at the Miami Yacht Club are interesting and short and provide you with an opportunity to help guide the society.

President's Message

Our Society is on a sound financial basis and thanks to John Doherty; we now have an annual budget. In order to underwrite our many activities, we rely on your dues and our only fundraiser during the year-the Christmas in Ireland Dinner/Dance*. During this past year our income was \$40,140, expenses were \$42,540 so that we lost \$2,400. Only by maintaining adequate reserve funds are we able bridge this financial gap. Part of this gap was caused by our declining membership. During this past year 21 new members joined, 4 died (RIP) and 30 chose not to renew --for a net

reduction of 13. If some of your friends chose not to renew, please call them. We have contacted them on 5 separate occasions, including phone calls. We now have 160 members.

Joseph McManus, President

The St. Patrick's Day Committee, Inc.

The St. Patrick's Day Committee, Inc., is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization affiliated with **the South Florida Emerald Society, Inc.**, 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 the St. Patrick's Day Committee so that we can fully meet the reporting requirements of the IRS and the rules of the community grants programs.

St. Patrick's Day Festival

Our grant applications to the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Committee and the Coral Gables Cultural Affairs Commission seeking support for the St. Patrick's Day Festival have been approved. The County awarded us \$3,314 and the City awarded \$1,000. We wish to thank the City of Coral Gables and member Don Slesnick, Mayor of Coral Gables. We also thank the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. Thanks also to Oliver Kerr for putting together the application packages.

Jon Lindeman has volunteered to chair the event this year which will be March 10. Three planning meetings have already taken place and another is scheduled for January. For details call **Carroll Cameron, President of the St. Patrick's Day Committee**, at 305 232-2015. Volunteers are needed and all are welcome to attend any meeting or may call the number at the top of this newsletter.

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 Barbara McManus with the assistance of Oliver and Mary Ann Kerr.

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.

The Wren Boys in January.

Mark your calendars now for the next fun session of the Celtic Cultural Series. The Kerr brothers, Dan Fitzgerald, and other "boys" will treat you to a musical session on the Wren Boys, the second annual celebration, at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 14, 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, and some not-so-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 Catholic clergy of Ireland who generally frowned on a day and evening of drinking and carousing, certainly an "occasion of sin".

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.*

*The South Florida Emerald Society, Inc.
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