



# Newsletter\*

FEBRUARY 2005

*This is the second edition of the Irish Fair of Minnesota Newsletter. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.*

## IRISH FAIR 2005 MUSIC HEADLINERS ANNOUNCED !

**Flogging Molly** Friday August 12<sup>th</sup>-- Irish folk meets punk rock; musical diversity.



**Danú** Saturday and Sunday-- an Irish traditional music group based in Co. Waterford, Ireland and; the *incomparable* **Tommy Makem**, singer, storyteller, actor and bard –Sunday only.

**Young Dubliners** Fri and Sat August 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> – known for their intensity and absorbing musical diversity.

### *Preview the Headliners:*

*The Young Dubliners will be playing at the Fine Line in Minneapolis on Tuesday, March 8.*

*Flogging Molly will be at First Ave. in Minneapolis on Thursday, March 10.*

## GET READY FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY FESTIVITIES- VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Irish Fair of Minnesota and all of the local Irish and Irish-loving community will be celebrating next month. The next newsletter will come out by March 10<sup>th</sup> and will be focused on publicizing those events.

The Irish Fair could use some help with promotional activities around St. Patrick's Day. **If you could lend a hand with any of the activities below, please contact the appropriate person.**

March 13: Day of Irish Dance at Landmark Center, downtown St. Paul, Noon-5pm. We need help staffing our information table. There will be event info to distribute and we'll be collecting email addresses for our newsletter and recruiting volunteers for August. A 2-3 hour shift would be very helpful. Contact Kathi Jones, [dnkjones@frontiernet.net](mailto:dnkjones@frontiernet.net), for details and to sign up.

March 17: Irish Celebration at Landmark Center, 10am - 4pm: Same thing as above.

March 17: St. Paul St. Pat's Day Parade, downtown St. Paul, 11am-1pm. (This is the biggest St. Pat's parade in the Upper Midwest.) We need folks to help carry our banner, pass out information and tell people about the festival. Contact Molly Kinsella ([molly.kinsella@target.com](mailto:molly.kinsella@target.com)), for details and to sign up.

March 17: Minneapolis St. Pat's Day Parade, downtown MPLS, 6-7:30pm. Same deal as in St. Paul, but this time going down the Nicollet Mall. Contact Molly Kinsella ([molly.kinsella@target.com](mailto:molly.kinsella@target.com)), for details and to sign up.

We are working on some little perks for helping out.. Ask your volunteer contact for details.

**PLEASE SEND INFORMATION ON YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ST.PAT'S ACTIVITIES to the Newsletter editor ([siobhandugan@comcast.net](mailto:siobhandugan@comcast.net)) with Subject "St.Pat's Stuff" .**

## \*NAME THAT (THIS!) NEWSLETTER

And the name of the newsletter is...*we haven't decided yet!* There were so many good submissions we decided to share them with you and do a run-off of the top 4. Below are the offerings, explanations (where offered) and authors.

### IRISH LANGUAGE ENTRIES:

Litir na Ndaoine 'letter of the people' – Chad Gillard

**M.E.G.A.N. (Minnesota's Extraordinary Gaelach Aonach Nuachlitir)** -- Jane

Armstrong

**Minnesota Irish Fair Nuachtlitir** –Amy Fastner  
**The Nuachtlitir** –Tom Risor

### IRISH SYMBOLS/IRISH MINNESOTAN

**The Ogham Stone of Minnesota**- Amanda Johnson

**The Claddagh Connection**- The first line of the "mission" of the newsletter was to keep people connected– Maria Bucaro

**Irish Fair Craic; The Frosty Craic; The rePeat**– Patti Boyle

**"Fair Thee Well"**– Lisa M. Graff

**The Pied Piper** – R. Philipp (*Hey! Wasn't PP from Hamlin? Germany?? Yonder east a bit???*- Editor)

**THE SHILLELAGH** – Michael Johnstone

### NAMES WITH A STORY

"Where we stood to watch the small *freebirds* fly"

This lyric taken from the Fields of Athenry, a popular Irish song that dates back to the 1880's, brings everything home for me. The "Freebird" would be an excellent name for the newsletter. Much of the true information that an Irishman received under the 800 years of English rule came through the roving story tellers, musicians, tinkers and others. These people were Freebirds.

When the Irish and Scotch Irish brought their music to the mountains of Appalachia and to the farm fields and river valleys of the Midwest, this music became their stories of the old country, and helped free them of some of their homesickness, their 'Freebird'.

When the Irish emigrated to this country in the 1840's we knew three things about them; they were poor, they were hungry, and they were probably never, ever, going to see their loved ones back home again.

The best source of information for an Irish immigrant came from a newer Irish immigrant, someone just off the boat. They became the "Freebirds" for the Irish in America. They brought news of friends, family and the struggle for independence .

My choice for the newsletter: " **THE FREEBIRD**"  
–James McGovern

**FAIR PLAY** Strange to say, I think of this as an Irish (Gaelic) expression. Especially in Connemara, when someone is performing -- doing a great job with a song, or feet flying in a dance -- people will shout out "Fair Play dhuit!" (Fair Play to you), to offer praise an encouragement to the performer. It's a very Irish thing, and, of course, works nicely with Irish Fair.  
–Will Kenny

**THE ORACLE** Webster's definition (2); A person or agency considered to being a source of wise counsel or prophetic opinions.

Ties to Irish Folklore: The Delphic oracle was in its origins, a place with a well, surrounded by trees and water ("HARRIET ISLAND") and places to hang votive offering of the praying peasants (THE IRISH FAIR) considered to exist hundreds of years before the rival Kings of Ireland began bringing to this spot their own votive tributes of silver, gold and crowns of precious stones.  
–Rev. Dr. Jim Hillman

### Vote for one of the 4 Finalists:

**FAIR PLAY**

**FREEBIRDS**

**FAIR CRAIC**

**NUACHTLITIR**

by sending an email with 'Newsletter Name' in the subject line to [siobhandugan@comcast.net](mailto:siobhandugan@comcast.net)

Thanks to all of our entrants.

**Winner announced next month.**

*Really!*

## DERMOTT COWLEY OF O'DONOVAN'S JOINS IRISH FAIR BOARD

The newest member of the Irish Fair of Minnesota Board is Dermott Cowley, owner of O'Donovan's Irish Pub. Dermott was born in Drogheda in County Louth, where his parents own a small pub.

He came to New York when he was 19 and worked for big restaurant group there. "I'm a lifer in the hospitality business" says Dermott "I've never done a day's work in any other business in my entire life."

Dermott found he liked not only the welcoming, 'people' side of the business but also the entrepreneurial aspects that are necessary if the doors are to remain open. In time, he came to specialize in shepherding new pubs and restaurants through the first fragile couple years of existence, the time period when so many go under.

While in New York, he married a Minnesota woman, Laura. When the pair decided to start a family, it was time to move. "It was either come to Minnesota or go back to Ireland and ...I lost the coin toss," says Dermott with a grin.

A couple years after settling in the Twin Cities, Dermott heard that O'Donovan's was for sale. This beautiful pub, designed and crafted in County Derry, had only been open 10 months before the first owner was obliged to sell. He was reluctant at first to take over a business that



had just failed, but decided to take on the challenge of turning it around. Today the pub is thriving and recently celebrated its fifth anniversary in Dermott's hands.

Dermott says the key to an Irish pub is in the welcome, that people are greeted and made to feel at home, and that that be true for various types of folks, differing age groups and so on.

Dermott knew about the Irish Fair through the Irish community since coming to the Twin Cities. After he re-opened O'Donovan's, the Fair approached him about sponsorship, but the time wasn't right. "Making a go of the pub was taking all of my time and energy and, then, too, the set up at St. Thomas didn't offer much prospect to showcase our food." (Speaking of which, the corned beef at O'Donovan's is *luscious*. Goes down well with a pint, I find).

Since moving to Harriet Island, the opportunities with the Fair are broader. Dermott decided to "take a leap" and become an official Fair sponsor. As well, O'Donovan's had a tent at the Fair where hamburgers and fish and chips were served, and now he has joined the Board.

O'Donovan's Irish Pub will be a sponsor of the 2005 Fair and Dermott hopes more publicans in the area will follow suit. "That way," he says, "the Fair can continue to broaden participation and increase the offerings of genuine Irish fare and ambience. I'm hopeful, for instance, that we can create in time a more snug, welcoming area for people to eat in, more like an Irish pub would be."

Dermott's strong sense of hospitality and business acumen are valuable assets for the Fair.

## Cead Mile Failte, Dermott!

## HAPPY ST. BRIGID'S DAY, THEN AND NOW

February 1st, St. Brigid's Day was originally Imbolc, a day of the goddess Brigid. The day marked the anticipation of coming spring and Brigid was associated with the lambing season, healing, and fire. In celebration of Brigid -- goddess, saint and woman -- the newsletter recently interviewed Dr. Ed Sellner of the College of St. Catherine, where he teaches courses on Christian spirituality and on mentoring.

### Q. Who was Brigid to the ancient Celts?

A. In ancient times Brigid was a Trinity goddess sacred to Celtic people in Ireland and beyond. She was associated not only with fertility of nature, but of the mind as she was a goddess of inspiration and poetry. The Celts had an animistic religion which means that they felt the divine was expressed in all of nature -- in animals, plants, and stones. We have tended to view animistic religions traditionally as the lowest form of spirituality, but in the last decade or so that is changing and people are reconnecting with nature-based spirituality. This is certainly true in contemporary Ireland, where there is a broad exploration of *all* of Ireland's spiritual past.

The Irish society of those times, according to both classical authors and Celtic ones, valued generosity, poetry, valor, beauty and had a healthy respect for eros—not only between a man and a woman but also between men. There was also great appreciation for the value of feminine leadership---women were druids, bards, judges and warriors, and had numerous legal rights, including the right to divorce. When I speak on this subject matter people sometimes ask me "Well, aren't you just talking about New Age stuff?" And I answer "No, actually this is Old Age stuff."

This is the setting into which Brigid the woman and saint was born. These values ---and the natural Celtic rebelliousness are the basis for the differences between the early Irish/Celtic monastic-community based church and the more centralized, male-dominated and authoritarian Church that developed elsewhere.

### Q. Let's hear about that historical Brigid, the abbess of Kildare.

A. Saint Brigid's story is intertwined with that of the goddess. Both had a religious center in Kildare with both female and male members. Both had an association with druidism -- Brigid the Saint's father was said to be a Druid, and many of her attributes are shared with the goddess, for example, generosity, healing, and midwifery. The intertwining of the new and old religion didn't bother early Irish Christians like Brigid. For example, another Irish saint, Columcille, referred to Jesus as "my Druid". Only tales written later about the saints emphasize an antagonism between the new and the old religions.

The Irish believed St. Brigid to be the midwife that helped Mary give birth to Jesus—a myth that only makes sense if you consider that the Celts did not view time to be linear, as we do, but to curve back on itself in a cyclical manner.

Historically, St. Brigid lived about 452 to 524 and was the abbess of a double monastery—that is, one for women and one for men religious. Tradition holds she was ordained a bishop by Bishop Mel, through the grace of God-- she is not the only woman, however, in the early Celtic church with great spiritual and religious authority. Her monastery was a center of learning and devotion and she founded many other churches as well.

### Q. To me, sounds like many traditional Celtic beliefs were first-rate. What did Christianity bring to the mix in terms of *specific values* that Brigid---or we-- would welcome ?

The most important, I think was Forgiveness, the ideal of loving your enemy. The Celts had a warrior society based on retribution, so this was quite new and revolutionary, very appealing. Not always lived up to, but at least as an ideal it is there in Christianity. And Compassion--St. Brigid was especially known for her compassion, her activity to satisfy the poor, alleviate every hardship, to spare every wretched person or suffering animal.

Ed Sellner has written extensively on Celtic and Christian spirituality including: *Soul-Making: The Telling of a Spiritual Journey*, *Wisdom of the Celtic Saints*, *Father and Son: Time Lost, Love Recovered*, and most recently, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, and *Celtic Soul Friend: A Trusted Guide for Today*. He is also a frequent speaker on these topics in the Cultural Area of the Irish Fair.



Courtesy of the  
**Fair Children's Area**

### How to Weave St. Brigid's Cross

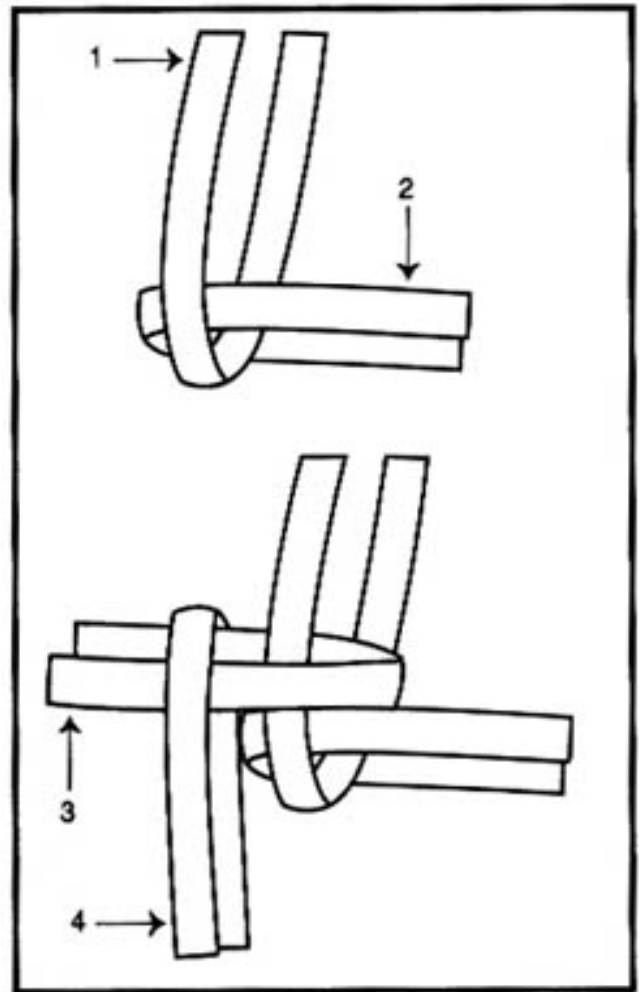
You will need: 16 pieces of straw or other weaving material, each 8" long. Thread to tie off the ends.

Although the cross of Brigid (St. Brigid's Cross) is usually made from rushes or straw in Ireland, you can easily weave one of the decorative crosses from many materials. Any limber material such as a vine or long grass will do. If you have access to stalks of wheat, the cross takes on an even deeper dimension if you leave the head of grain which, when woven, will form the ends of the cross's arms. Formed from chenille pipe cleaners, the crosses make an attractive Christmas tree ornament for little hands to craft.

Fold the first two pieces in half, slipping one side of one piece through the fold of the other. Fold a third piece in half over the second piece. (See the diagram)

Continue adding folded pieces, lapping each piece over the one you just placed previously. When all 16 pieces have been placed, take the loose ends of the last piece and tuck them under the piece they face.

Pinch the loose ends of each arm of the cross together and tie tightly with twine. Clip the loose ends as close as possible to the tie.



Watch for the next edition of the **Irish Fair of Minnesota Newsletter**, which will be dedicated to promoting all the **St. Patrick's Day** festivities.

Please send any news, comments or suggestions for the newsletter to [siobhandugan@comcast.net](mailto:siobhandugan@comcast.net).

Until next month,  
Best Regards from the  
*Irish Fair of  
Minnesota*