

IRELANDS CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
CONTINUED

Decorating Public Places



Town center decorations are erected and lights turned in late November or early December - it seems to get even earlier with each passing year. Streets are filled with lights, shops vie to have the most impressive window display and huge trees go up in town squares and shopping centers.

Decorating the outside of houses was a rarity until the last 5-6 years but is now becoming more common, with some people putting on quite lavish displays of lights.

The Christmas Swim!

There are some intrepid people who get out in the open air and away from all the excess on Christmas morning, though it can be fairly miserable out there at that time of year. One long standing tradition in Sandycove, a suburb of South Dublin is the Christmas Day Swim - in the sea. Yes, in Ireland, in December, they swim in the freezing Irish sea - crazy but they say it's fun! Quite a crowd of less brave people - wrapped up in coats, hats and scarves - gather to watch the blue swimmers emerge from the water.

The Wren Boys



St Stephen's Day, the day after Christmas, is the day when the Wren Boys come out, mostly in the South of Ireland but also in certain localities elsewhere.

"Hunting the Wren" is an ancient ritual - in its original form a wren was hunted, killed and hung on a holly bush. The wren had, according to legend, earned this cruel punishment by betraying the hiding place of St Stephen, the first martyr, by chattering on the bush where he was hiding. A betrayal which led to the saint being stoned to death.

In reality the tradition almost certainly refers back to pagan times, long predating Christianity, and is related to the position of the wren as the king of

birds in Celtic Mythology. This position was supposedly earned when in a contest the tiny wren flew higher than any other bird, a feat managed by the clever wren hitching a ride on an Eagle's back, and then launching itself and flying high when the Eagle became tired and began to return to land.

Nowadays no birds are killed, instead those engaged in the hunt, the so called 'wren boys', dress in straw suits or other costumes (not unlike Halloween costumes) and go from door to door, beating drums and playing whistles, and repeating the rhyme below while asking for "a penny for the wren".

"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."
(In many parts of Ireland the word 'treat' is pronounced to rhyme with 'great!')

The 'pennies' collected were in the past used to fund a big party for the wren boys in a local hostelry, where much alcohol was consumed. This, along with its probable pagan origins, made the tradition very unpopular with the clergy, and their disapproval, along with mass emigration, was instrumental in the tradition almost dying out in the mid 20th century. It has been revived now though, and since the money collected now goes to local charities, the clergy are much more supportive.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!



" FRIENDSHIP, UNITY, AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY "

IRELANDS CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Ireland's Christmas traditions are not dissimilar to those found in many other parts of the world - there is lots of shopping, gifts are exchanged, people eat too much turkey and Santa Claus is the main man for most children! These are some of the most widely practiced traditions surrounding an Irish Christmas, though of course every family will have their own traditions and will celebrate the festive season in their own way.

A Light in the Window



One old custom that many continue to observe is the placing of a candle in the window on Christmas Eve, a symbol to welcome strangers and to remember those who are far away from home. I am not entirely sure how well strangers dropping by for a visit would actually be welcomed were they to take the symbol literally! But the little lights shining in windows do give a warm and welcoming feel when walking through a town.

Decorating the House

Houses are decorated with natural material such as holly, pine cones and ivy but also glass, wooden or plastic ornaments. Many people place a natural holly wreath on their front doors.

The Crib



Most people will have at least a small crib in the house, with the baby Jesus only placed into the manger on Christmas morning. Cribs are also erected, some almost life size, in churches, town centers and even shopping malls.

Christmas Trees

Natural Christmas trees, usually Noble Fir, are by far the most popular choice, though fake ones are increasing in popularity. Trees are decorated with lights and trinkets, generally the same ones year after year, though some style conscious people create (or buy) a whole new look for their tree annually. The 8th of December, or around that time, is the usual date for putting up and decorating the tree.

- SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**
- Irelands Christmas Traditions
 - Ireland Trip Raffle Tickets
 - Pub Crawls
 - 2009 State Board Calendars
 - 2009 St Patrick's Parade

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2009 PUB TOURS!

Seats are limited and go fast so don't delay!
Sign up today!

Philadelphia JAN 10

\$50 non AOH AOH MEMBERS \$45

NYC MAY 09

\$55 non AOH AOH MEMBERS \$50

Contact Bro Ken Walsh at 610-462-9963 or bigirish44@aol.com to get your seats.

IRELAND TRIP RAFFLE TICKETS

We need your help to make this our best year ever and to reach our goal of a complete sell out of 2000 tickets. If you need additional tickets or have questions or concerns please call Lou James at: 610-866-9099 or his cell phone at: 610-442-0583 or email him at jdfd1997@aol.com. The drawing will be held on Sunday, July 26, 2009 at the Columbian Home of Allentown. Please send your sold tickets to Lou at 1420 Stoke Park Rd, Bethlehem, PA 18017 or bring them to the monthly general meeting. **Make checks payable to: AOH, Lehigh County Div 1**

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

Donegal Square - 534 Main Street Bethlehem, PA www.donegal.com

Ryan & O'Carroll's - (Irish Gifts) 3140-B W. Tilghman St. PMB 117, Allentown, PA

Corporate Environments - 605 East Broad Street Bethlehem, PA www.ceg-pa.com

SUPPORT YOUR AOH BROTHERS

Do you have a project or service that you need help with? Contact an AOH brother for help!

Santa A. Claus - America's #1 Santa, 570-465-2206

Bro. Michael J. Toth - Rare books & book searches, 610-346-7737

Bro. Dan Bonner - Dapper Dan the Clown, 610-253-6761

Bro. Scott Rosati - S. Rosati Electric, 610-703-1677

Bro. John Chaya - Jack Callaghan's Ale House, 2027 Tilghman St.

Bro. Roger Brock - Financial Consultant KNBT Securities, 610-882-5304

Bro. Bob Carlin - Certified Public Accountant, 610-798-7220

Bro. Chris Cowen - Somakhn Athletic Training Center, 15th & Chew St. 610-351-1747

Bro. Joseph Kloss - Accounting & tax services for small businesses, 610-435-6681, JoeCFO@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

100 Members on Roll | 99 Members Paid

New Applicants for Membership:

None

Invitees for Initiations:

None

Brothers Initiated Last Month:

None

2009 ST. PATRICK'S PARADE

Volunteers are needed! If you would like to help make the parade even better than last year, please stop by the meetings and be a part of the team. Next meeting is Monday January 5th at the KoC @ 7 PM.

2009 STATE BOARD CALENDARS AVAILABLE

The 2009 State Board Calendars are now available for purchase. Calendars are \$40 each. Winners are based on the nightly PA Lotto. Contact Mark Greenawalt for information 610-533-0568

AOH LICENSE PLATES

Dauphin County, Division One's website is open to accept applications for the new AOH specialty license plate! License plates are available for purchase at : www.bobbysandsaoh.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5**	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21*	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

* General membership meetings are held every third Wednesday of the month at the Allentown Knights of Columbus House in the Hibernian room starting at 7:30pm. All members are encouraged and welcome to attend.

HIBERNIAN ROOM USAGE

If you wish to use the Hibernian room for meetings or get together, please make prior arrangements with the Columbian Home President, Bro. John Dawson. The information can be left at the Columbian Home by phoning 610-432-6333 or by stopping in during hours of operations.

IRISH WEBSITES TO REMEMBER

- www.aoh.com
- www.paaoh.org
- www.allentownaoh.com
- www.irishphiladelphia.com
- www.pahurling.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 12/25—Christmas
- 1/5—St. Patrick's Parade Committee Meeting**
- 1/7—Officers Meeting
- 1/21—General members meeting*
- 2/2 - St. Patrick's Parade Committee Meeting**
- 2/4 - Officers Meeting
- 2/18 - General Members meeting*

REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS

Kelly Chaya
Brother Ed Jordan's wife Kelly
Brother Brian Foy's sister Kellie and Brother-in-law Adam
Brother Bob Higgins
Please remember all other brothers who need our prayers as well as our deceased brothers.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS HOME NEWS

Happy Hour continues Mon to Fri 4pm to 6pm & Sat 1pm to 3pm \$.50 cents off all mixed drinks wines & bottle beers. \$1.00 domestic pony bottles
New Lunch & Dinner Menus stop in and experience a refreshing new change with lots of specials
Dave Marchetti performs on the piano every Sunday starting at 6:30pm
Sunday Breakfast ALWAYS A FAVORITE 8:00am to 1:30pm Experience a great new taste, prepared just for you.
Mondays Hot Dogs & Burgers stop and enjoy

2008 DIVISION I OFFICERS

Chaplain	TBD		
President	Ed Barry	edbarryaoh@aol.com	610-417-1474
Vice President	Ken Walsh	bigirish44@aol.com	610-462-9963
Financial Secretary	Ed Jordan	ecj212@aol.com	610-439-5149
Treasurer	Mark Greenawalt		610-533-0568
Recording Secretary	Scott Rosati	s.rosati@verizon.net	610-703-1677
Standing Committee	Jim Spang	lleoa@ptd.net	610-442-4889
Marshal	Sean Shields		610-349-9780
Sentinel	Andy Carr		610-845-8674
Special Committees	Pat Gavigan	pgavigan@rcn.net	610-435-1356