

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

St. Patrick's Day which falls on 17 March is a splendid opportunity to learn more about Ireland. We hope that you will find this newsletter inspirational and that one day you will be able to visit Ireland, the greenest of all European countries. The European Union spans from Dublin to Lublin (as John Paul II once said), and we believe that being at one end of the Union, we should know more about the other, especially that our histories have so much in common.

HAPPY ST PATRICK'S DAY!

On behalf of all staff members,

Aneta Jawinewska

Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland. He was born in Wales somewhere around AD 385. He was carried off by pirates and spent six years in slavery before escaping and training as a missionary.

The most famous story about Saint Patrick is him driving the snakes from Ireland. He died on 17th March in AD 461 and this day has since been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day.

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St Patrick's Flag



17 March - St Patrick's Day, Ireland's patron Saint



IRELAND IN BRIEF

Irish name:	EIRE
Area:	68,897 km ²
Population:	3.6 million
Capital:	Dublin
Division:	26 counties
Government:	parliamentary republic
Religion:	95% Roman Catholic
Major towns:	Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford
Currency:	Euro
Major river:	Shannon
Highest peak:	Carrantuohill 1041 m
Climate:	mild and moist

For centuries Ireland was called the Emerald Isle.



In Ireland, like in Poland, the probable never happens, but the impossible – always, as the writer John P. Mahaffey once said. The shortest definition of the Irish was given by one of the advisers to Winston Churchill who said that the Irish are like the Polish, only a bit less so.



Irish Advice

Work like you don't need the money.
Love like you've never been hurt.
Dance like nobody's watching.
Sing like nobody's listening
Live like it's Heaven on Earth



IRISH PROVERBS

A silent mouth is musical.
A constant guest is never welcome.
Death is a poor man's best physician.
Have a mouth of ivy and a heart of holly.
Reputation is more enduring than life.
Face the sun, but turn your back to the storm.
Falling is easier than rising.



Mystic, Melancholic and Marvellous

Picture this: It is late winter. Wherever you look, you see green. Cherry trees blossom. Daffodils spring up on meadows and lawns. The sun is shining and there is no mist. Instead of crowds of people smartly dressed, there are groups of happy young people with fiery red hair and freckles. Nobody is in a hurry. They all seem to be content with life. You don't hear "sorry", you don't see artificial smiles.

Picture also this: five minutes later it begins to rain. The wind is blowing waves of torrential rain from the Atlantic and grey skies take over the whole world. The atmosphere becomes dense and spooky. There is melancholy in the air which smells of moss, stones, and permanently wet peat bogs

People's hearts are warmed at fireplaces and bar tables. This is Ireland. Read on to find the details.

There are many countries which built their power by force, domination and clever politics. Ireland is entirely different. Yet, it has made a much bigger impact on the rest of the world than many much larger countries. Ireland was traditionally a poor, backward, overcrowded and subjugated country without a wealth of natural resources. But it had one important asset: its people - tough, brave, resourceful, determined and fiercely proud of their heritage.

After the mid-19th-century potato famine the Irish were forced to seek a better life overseas. They established vibrant Irish communities in all English-speaking parts of the world. Irish immigrants started as "shanty Irish" who took the most menial, lowest-paying jobs as mill-workers, ditch-diggers, street-sweepers, and cleaners. They worked hard and saved their pennies to provide their children

with a better future. In time, the next generations started to play more important roles in all spheres of life including politics, education, medicine and culture.

There are many Irish celebrities, achievements and traits, but what is it really about the Irish?

There is a certain Irish charm, touch, feel and general atmosphere enriched with fairy magic that simply cannot be put into words. The only fitting conclusion seems to be the words: ERIN GO BRAGH! (Ireland forever).

Did you know that?

- Bernard Connor, an Irishman, was court physician to Jan Sobieski, King of Poland. He also wrote a two volume history of Poland.
- James Hoban, an Irishman, designed the White House in Washington D.C.
- John Field, a 19th c. Irish composer, invented the nocturne, and had an important influence on the music of Chopin.
- There are 44 million Americans who are proud of their Irish ancestry
- George Bernard Shaw, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, also won an Oscar for his screenplay for the 1938 film version of his play Pygmalion. He became the only person ever to have won both prizes.
- Cedrick Gibbons, art director, was the designer of the first Academy Award Oscar statuette in 1927. He won 11 Oscars for his influential production designs
- Dublin has produced 4 winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature: William Butler Yeats (1923), George Bernard Shaw (1925), Samuel Beckett (1959), and Seamus Heaney (1995).
- Samuel Beckett, the most famous Irish playwright, wrote mainly in French.
- John Joe Callaghan, an Irishman, one of the best teachers of English, is a member of Linguaton staff.



A History of Ireland in a Nutshell



Pre-Christian Ireland

Ireland, in old Irish "ERIN", derives its traditions from ancient Celts, who settled on this island between 600 – 100 BC. They established a number of small kingdoms called "RI" (king). Then they merged into five major states. A characteristic feature of the pre-Christian culture was the cast of druids, who were priests, teachers and sorcerers at the same time. They had authority in matters of religion, law, medicine, and education. The Romans who invaded the Celtic tribes in Britain and on the Continent never tried to conquer Ireland which they called "Hibernia" (land of winter).

Early Christian and Mediaeval Ireland

Christianity was brought to Ireland about 430 AD by a British slave, Patrick, who later became the country's patron saint. Patrick's successors built numerous monasteries all over the country which became centres of spirituality, art, learning, and culture. Irish missionaries established centres of Christian learning throughout Western Europe. That period of Irish history – which lasted three centuries – is often called "The Golden Age of Saints and Scholars". Then, the Norse invaders began to ravage and plunder the monasteries.

Viking Invasion

The first raids of the Vikings on the Irish Coast occurred in 795. Their invasions forced the Irish kingdoms to unite and organise resistance. Brian Boru is regarded as the first ruler of Ireland who effectively opposed the Vikings.

Anglo-Norman Conquest

Over one and a half centuries later Ireland fell victim to the Anglo-Norman invasion. The Normans, who invaded and conquered England after the battle of Hastings in 1066, arrived in Ireland from Wales and soon came to control almost three quarters of Ireland. During the reign of Henry III, the political influence of the Anglo-Norman lords increased. They established a feudal system and English law was introduced. The native Celtic aristocracy was destroyed and the powerful Anglo-Irish families were allowed to rule the country.

Tudor Ireland

Henry VIII forced the Irish Parliament to recognise him as King of Ireland. He failed, however, to introduce his Church Reformation. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Irish rebelled against attempts to reinforce English authority and religion. Gradually, all Gaelic institutions were destroyed and Ireland became England's first colony. The native Irish were driven off their land or became labourers on estates belonging to the Protestants.

Beginings of Modern Ireland

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell "pacified" the Catholic Irish who had supported the King. He encouraged more Protestants to settle in Ireland. The defeat of the Royalists was followed by another huge confiscation of land which was sold to Protestant landowners. The whole country soon became a source of cheap food and labour for the colonisers. When Henry James was dethroned by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, he crossed to Ireland from France where he found refuge. The Catholics welcomed him, but the Protestants acknowledged William of Orange as King and offered strong resistance. James's army was defeated at the battle of Boyne in 1690. The Protestant victory and political domination of Ireland was complete. As a consequence, a growing hatred between the Catholic and the Protestant began.

Radicalism

The French Revolution contributed to the revival of Irish radicalism. The Irish demanded complete emancipation of Catholics. In 1798 the united Irishmen staged a revolt which seriously alarmed the British government. As a result, they declared a state of insurrection and imposed military law. The Irish hoped to get the support of Napoleon, but the French expedition was quickly defeated.

Union with Great Britain

In 1800 Ireland was united with Britain to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland which lasted 120 years. The Irish Parliament was abolished. From that time on the two countries had not only one king but also one parliament and one army. The effect of the union was soon found to be disastrous. Trade and industry rapidly declined.

Great Famine

In the years 1845 – 1847 the potato crop failed as a result of a disease known as blight. Potatoes constituted the staple food for the Irish people, so a terrible famine took place. At least 1 million people starved to death. For many, emigration was the only escape from the desperate situation. In the following years about 2 million Irish settled in the USA alone. In a few years Ireland's population dropped from 8 million to 5 million.

Struggle for Independence

Ireland never managed fully to recover from the Great Famine. In 1858, in New York, Irish immigrants founded the Fenian Society which aimed to achieve an independent Irish state. Fenians often used force in order to achieve their aim. This became a serious problem for the English government, and radical reforms were made. Among others a Home Rule bill was introduced, but because of the outbreak of World War I, it was postponed. Home Rule was opposed by both Ulster Protestants and Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone), secret Catholic organisation. Like the Fenians, Sinn Fein demanded complete separation of Ireland from Britain. On Easter Monday 1916 the Irish volunteers began a rising in Dublin. The British quickly defeated the rebels and the leaders of the Easter Rising were executed. This provoked an outcry. Sinn Fein won new support among the Catholic population. They met in Dublin on 21 January 1919 and declared Ireland independent.

Independence

In 1921 David Lloyd George, Britain's Prime Minister, offered Southern Ireland independence on the same basis as that of the British dominions while the 6 northern counties, predominantly protestant, were to remain within the UK. The new dominion created in 1922 was called the Irish Free State. The leader of Sinn Fein rejected the treaty with Britain because he wanted the whole of Ireland to become a fully independent republic. In 1949 the Irish Free Republic left the Commonwealth and declared itself a Republic. In 1955 Ireland was admitted to the United Nations. In 1973 it joined the European Economic Community. Today Ireland is undergoing profound political, social, economic, and cultural changes.



Irish symbols



Flag: Ireland's tricolour flag of green, white, and orange symbolises the union of north and south (the green represents the Republican community, the orange is the colour associated with Protestant Ulster, and the white refers to the peace between the two).



Shamrock: undoubtedly the most identifiable symbol of Ireland. Legend has it that during a religious debate with the Druid priests, St. Patrick plucked a shamrock to demonstrate the meaning of the Trinity—three leaves held together by a single stem. On St. Patrick's Day every year, Aer Lingus – Ireland's airline carrier - flies fresh shamrock to Irish Embassies all over the globe for their traditional National Day diplomatic parties.





Harp: played by Celtic minstrels, is the oldest official symbol of Ireland. It appears on Irish coins, the presidential flag, state seals, uniforms, and official documents. The harp is most often associated with Guinness, which adopted the harp as its trademark in 1862.



Leprechaun: an Irish fairy. He looks like a small, old man (about 2 feet tall), often dressed like a shoemaker, with a cocked hat and a leather apron. According to legend, leprechauns are aloof and unfriendly, live alone, and pass the time making shoes. They also possess a hidden pot of gold. Treasure hunters can often track down a leprechaun by the sound of his shoemaker's hammer. If caught, he can be forced (with the threat of bodily violence) to reveal the whereabouts of his treasure, but the captor must keep their eyes on him every second. If the captor's eyes leave the leprechaun (and he often tricks them into looking away), he vanishes and all hopes of finding the treasure are lost.



Celtic Cross: This ringed cross is a combination of the Celtic tradition and Christianity. It has a stepped base, carved pictorial scenes from the Old and New Testaments and other ornaments. It proudly stands in Drumcliffe next to the remains of the 10th c. Celtic tower.



The Claddagh Ring - an Irish symbol of love, friendship and loyalty. It depicts two hands holding a crowned heart. It dates back 400 years and its origin is surrounded by misty fables. The ring is very popular. It was worn by Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. It is a perfect souvenir from Ireland.

✿ **St. Patrick** – Little is certain about the patron saint and national hero of Ireland. Legend has it that he was born in 4 c. in Scotland. Captured and forced into slavery, Patrick spent 6 years herding sheep. He escaped walking 200 miles, and in France he became a priest. On his return to Ireland he was a missionary preaching, baptising and establishing schools and colleges. He died on 17 March 461. after bringing the Christian faith to Ireland. That day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since.

Guinness – the world's famous Irish beer. It was first produced by Arthur Guinness's brewery in Dublin in the mid-18th century.

B&B – Bed and breakfast hotels first began on the Emerald Isle. They are now popular all over Britain offering inexpensive accommodation to tourists.

Irish Whiskey – a spirit which the Irish claim is smoother, mellower, and lacking in unpleasant aftertaste.



Irish Wake – the all-night vigil by a corpse before burial usually involving lamentations and heavy drinking of spirits.

Irish Coffee – You add whiskey to your coffee and top it with double cream.

Irish jig – the national dance step

Irish pubs – a lot more fun than English pubs – not so much to drown your sorrows but to share your joy



Irish Myths and Legends

Countless works have been written on Irish myths and legends. Irish history is rich in stories and sagas about heroes, gods, wars, and romances. The stories tell of a land inhabited by ancient spirits and fairies. The “**Tuatha De Danann**” are said to be the Irish equivalent of the Greek and Roman gods. Legend has it that they arrived in Ireland about 350 BC from the north islands of Greece where they had learned their druidry, prophesy and magic. **The Dagda** was the leader of the Irish pantheon of gods, the father of all. He is said to have carried a harp, a club, and a cauldron. The harp represents the music and poetry of Ireland, the club – war, and the cauldron – the Celtic spirit. It was also the pot from which the Dagda drank and ate before copulating with the female gods. Therefore, it was also the symbol of fertility. The “Tuatha De Danann” were driven underground by invaders and thereafter inhabited the dark underworld of the hills and mountains, which were already full of fairies. Halloween was the night when the hills opened up and the spirits and the gods poured forth, led by flocks of red birds and the three headed vulture.

Crom was the god of corn or agriculture. The people were terrified of Crom and offered sacrifices of first born animals and babies in return for a plentiful harvest. On the Halloween night the sacrifices were made, the hills burnt brightly and fear reigned in the hearts of all. This night was the night of sacrifice and fertility when the gods played freely.



Pub Etiquette

The crucial thing here is the "round" system, in which each participant takes turns to shout an order. To the outsider, this may appear casual; you will not necessarily be told it's your round and other participants may appear only too happy to substitute for you. But make no mistake, your failure to "put your hand in your pocket" will be noticed. People will mention it the moment you leave the room. The reputation will follow you to the grave, where after it will attach to your offspring and possibly theirs as well. In some cases, it may become permanently enshrined in a family nickname.

Old Irish Toast

May you be half an hour in Heaven before the Devil knows you're dead

Woolly Jumpers

Ireland produces vast quantities of woollen knitwear and, under a US /Irish trade agreement, American visitors may not return to the States without a minimum of two sweaters, of which one at least must be predominantly green. Airline staff may check that you have the required documentation before you are allowed to disembark. Note: under no circumstances will you see an Irish person wearing a woollen jumper. These jumpers are worn solely by Americans to identify them to muggers, thieves and knackers.



The Weather

It is often said that the Irish are a Mediterranean people who only come into their own when the sun shines on consecutive days (which it last did around the time of St Patrick). For this reason, Irish people dress for conditions in Palermo rather than Dublin; and it is not unusual in March to see young people sipping cool beer outside city pubs and cafes, enjoying the air and the soft caress of hailstones on their skin. The Irish attitude to weather is the ultimate triumph of optimism over experience: Every time it rains, we look up at the sky and are shocked and betrayed. Then we go out and buy a new umbrella.



Time

Ireland has two time-zones:
(1) Greenwich Mean Time
(2) "Local" time.

Local time can be anything between ten minutes

and three days behind GMT, depending on the position of the earth and the whereabouts of the man with the keys to the hall. Again, the Irish concept of time has been influenced by the thinking of 20th century physicists, who hold that it can only be measured by reference to another body and can even be affected by factors like acceleration. For instance, a policeman entering a licensed premises in rural Ireland late at night is a good example of another body from whom it can be reliably inferred that it is in fact closing time. When this happens, acceleration is the advised option. Shockingly, the relativity argument is still not accepted as a valid defence in the Irish courts.

Irish Dancing

There are two main kinds of Irish dancing:

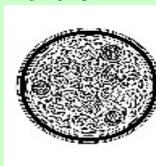
(1) Riverdance, which is now simultaneously running in every major city in the world except Ulan Bator and which some economists believe is responsible for the Irish economic boom; and (2) real Irish dancing, in which men do not wear frilly blouses and you still may not express yourself, except in a written note to the adjudicators.

Green

Strangely enough, Irish people tend to wear everything except green, which is associated with too many national tragedies, including 1798, the Famine and the current Irish soccer team. It's possible that green just doesn't suit the Irish skin colour, which is generally pale blue (see Weather).

Clothes

Visitors to Ireland in mid-March often ask: What clothes should I bring? The answer is: All of them!



Gaelic Games

St Patrick's Day brings the climax of the club championships in Gaelic games, which combine elements of the American sports of gridiron and baseball but are played with an intensity more associated with Mafia turf wars. The two main games are "football" and "hurling", the chief difference being that in football, the fights are unarmed. There is also "camogie" which is like hurling, except that in fights the hair may be pulled as well. Definitions of hurling "the fastest game on earth" was best described by a Cork man to an American tourist when he said "its like a cross between ice hockey and murder" Schools rugby: St Patrick's Day also brings the finals in schools rugby, a game based around the skills of wrestling, kicking, gouging, ear-biting, and assaults on other vulnerable body parts. The game is much prized in Ireland's better schools, where it's seen as an ideal grounding for careers in business and the law. It is well-known that St Patrick banished the snakes from Ireland. Less publicised is that he also banished kangaroos, polar bears and Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, all of which were regarded as nuisances by the early Irish Christians.



Sign-posting

In most countries, road signs are used to help motorists get from one place to another. In Ireland, it's not so simple. Sign-posting here is heavily influenced by Einstein's theories (either that or the other way round) of pace/time, and works on the basis that there is no fixed reference point in the universe, or not west of Mullingar anyway. Instead, location and distance may be different for every observer and, frequently, for neighbouring road-signs. The good news is Language. Ireland is officially bilingual, a fact which is reflected in the road-signs. This allows you to get lost in both Irish and English.

Religion

Ireland remains a deeply religious country, with the two main denominations being "us" and "them". In the unlikely event you are asked which group you belong to, the correct answer is: "I'm an atheist, thank God".