



. Welcome to our third Killawalla Email Newsletter

In this newsletter, we hope to update you on some of the things that have been happening in Killawalla and the surrounding areas since our last newsletter.

Seeing that we are approaching the Christmas season, as well, we are including some background on Irish Christmas customs many of us grew up with,

### **Killawalla Ladies Group**

The group had their first meeting on September 29<sup>th</sup> in the Community Center. A brainstorming session was held that elicited many excellent ideas and projects, some of these included, Flower Arranging, social get-togethers, computer training, health issues, cooking, decorating, night out, senior citizens party.

Senior Citizen Party, safety issues.



Already the group which has been meeting on a weekly basis, have had talks on security, cooking experiences, flower arranging, etc.

### **Sean N s Dancing**



Yes, once again, the old is new. The Sean N s dancing and singing is taking Ireland by storm. Killawalla has jumped on this bandwagon by offering classes to anyone who is interested. The instructor is Sean Scanlon, an All-Ireland Sean N s champion.

### **Men's Group**

The Killawalla Community Council called a special meeting of the men of the parish to look into the possibility of starting an organization for men; to ascertain what they might be interested in and to organize some follow up.

The meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2014.

More information about the results of the meeting will be published in our next email newsletter.

### **Killawalla's website**



The Killawalla website is being redesigned to make it more responsive. Clicking on the logo above will take you to the site.

*"The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we are but in what direction we are moving."* – Oliver W. Holmes

## *Irish Christmas Customs*

*We grew up with some local Christmas customs that we still remember and cherish. They made the Christmas season special for us and we will always treasure them.*

### **Candle in the window**

The placing of a lighted candle in the window of a house on Christmas Eve is still practiced today. It has a number of purposes but primarily it was a symbol of welcome to Mary and Joseph as they travelled looking for shelter.

The candle also indicated a safe place for priests to perform mass as, during Penal Times this was not allowed.

A further element of the tradition is that the candle should be lit by the youngest member of the household and only be extinguished by a girl bearing the name 'Mary'.

### **The table was set for the Guests**

After evening meal on Christmas Eve the kitchen table was again set and on it were placed a loaf of bread filled with caraway seeds and raisins, a pitcher of milk and a large lit candle. The door to the house was left unlatched so that Mary and Joseph, or any wandering traveller, could avail of the welcome.



RECOGNIZE ANYONE?

### **THE WREN BOYS**

During penal times, a group of soldiers were about to be ambushed. They had been surrounded, but a group of wrens pecked on their drums and woke them. The wren became known as "The Devil's Bird." To remember this on St Stephen's Day people have a procession and go door to door wearing old clothes, blackened faces and carrying a dead (now more often fake) wren on top of the pole.

On approaching a house, they usually chanted the following:

*"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze;  
Although he is little, his family is great,  
So rise up, landlady, and give us a treat;  
Bottles of whiskey and bottles of beer,  
And I wish you all a Happy New Year."*

## Irish Christmas Traditions (cont.)

### The “Strawboys”

"Strawboys" go out at all times of the year, but only to weddings. Taking their name from their disguise Strawboys are an ancient wedding tradition the origins of which are unclear. Strawboys are recognized by their uniquely shaped conical straw hats and dress and, despite their title, nowadays comprise both men and women.

The purpose of the Strawboy visit was to bring good luck, happiness, health and prosperity to the bride and groom. The central part of the ceremony is the crowning of the wedded couple before and after which our members dance, sing, play music and recite poems to entertain the guests.

### Christmas Holly

Holly is a symbol commonly associated with Christmas and has been used in celebrations for almost two thousand years.

To the Druids, it was holly's evergreen nature that made it special. They believed that it remained green to help keep the earth beautiful when the other trees shed their leaves. It was also their custom to wear it in their hair when they ventured into the forests to watch the priests collecting mistletoe. Holly was also once used for protection, and in ancient times, people would decorate doors and windows with it, in hopes that it would capture, or at least dissuade, any evil spirits before they could enter the house.



RECOGNIZE ANYONE?



LET IT SNOW



KILLAWALLA CHURCH



The light of the Christmas star to you  
The warmth of home and hearth to you  
The cheer and good will of friends to you  
The hope of a childlike heart to you  
The joy of a thousand angels to you  
The love of the Son and God's peace to you

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"TIME IS FREE BUT IT IS PRICELESS. YOU CAN'T OWN IT BUT YOU CAN USE IT. YOU CAN'T KEEP IT BUT YOU CAN SPEND IT. ONCE YOU'VE LOST IT, YOU CANNOT GET IT BACK"

## KILLAWALLA DEATHS

John Gibbons, Hazelrock buried in Killawalla Cemetery, November 24, 2014

John Ludden, Ipswich and Ballyburke, buried in Killawalla Cemetery, December 4, 2014



Tell us about yourself: what you are doing; how you are doing; what you miss; whom are your family/relatives; what you are working at; what are your experiences, Pictures are welcome also. Don't forget to send them to us at this [email](#) address. Thank you!

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*"Every morning sees some task begun, each evening sees it close. Something attempted! Something done, has earned a night's repose."*