

Wee bit o'...

By Claudia Hughes

'Tis sure, the rolling hills of Heppner are turning green and Leprechauns are appearing to soak up the rays. The little "big-headed people," as Mayor Les Paus-tian describes them, are scurrying hither and yon to once again prepare for "A Wee Bit O' Ireland in Heppner, Oregon" March 12-15.

The Irish family flags are flying on Main Street. The flags recognize the family from Ireland who settled in County Morrow in the 1800's, and those who continue to choose Heppner over Ireland. One of those flags is a Sweeney flag. Heppner's 2009 Irish honoree, Patrick Sweeney and family, will be recognized at the traditional KUMA Coffee Hour on Saturday morning, March 14, at the Elks, and will be leading the Great Green Parade that afternoon.

Other annual Irish events returning because "it's tradition" will be the Saturday afternoon Ceili or Ceileigh upstairs at the Elks from 2-4 p.m. As always, The Irish Singers, who have been part of Heppner's celebration for nearly 30 years, will have front and center stage with announce Michael Duffy at the mike. John Doherty and The Irish Singers from 2-2:20 p.m. and 3:30-4 p.m.; Joe Lindsay and Company (Ann and Luke Murray) from 2:25-2:45 p.m.; Will Hornyak, the Irish storyteller and musician from 2:50-3 p.m.; and Dan and Annie Monahan

Schauffler will be sharing their talent 3:05-3:25 p.m. As the Irish and Irish-for-a-day audience will tell you, "the afternoon turns out to be a fine foot stompin', sentimental, and humorous jam session, not to mention Irish reunion."

All musical entertainment is free to the public, thanks to the generous support of the Morrow County Unified Recreation District. The Saturday evening finale features choices: storyteller and musician Will Hornyak and Heppner grown Lindy Gravelle at the Heppner Elementary School or the Old Time Fiddlers at the Morrow County Fairgrounds.

Visitors are encouraged to take in the many festivities, both old and new in downtown Heppner, including the Sheepdog Trials at the Thompson Ranch on Highway 74. 'Tis a sport in itself and tribute to the early Irish sheepmen. Other sports would be boxing and the Motorcross, not to mention the eating marathon all around town. For a full schedule of events, visit www.heppnerchamber.com; check out your newspaper; or call the Heppner Chamber at 541-676-5536.

"Heppnerites invite you to join in the fun, food, and shenanigans for all ages and all interests. The community would be thankin' all the visitors and ye behind-the-scenes leprechauns who keep the celebration going with new and traditional events each year. Have a great green "Irish weekend."

Tribute Walk to be held Saturday

The Donna Schonbachler Tribute and Walk will be held March 14 beginning with a social hour from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at Heppner United Methodist Church. The walk will leave from the church at 9:30 a.m.

Breakfast treats and coffee will be provided for the social hour by various volunteers.

Schonbachler was a Heppner Home Health Hospice nurse who worked throughout Morrow and Gilliam Counties. She lost her battle with cancer last April.

In conjunction with the social hour and walk, a

Home Health and Hospice fundraiser is ongoing with all contributions from this event to stay in Morrow County.

T-shirts that were pre-ordered or ordered online will be at the church. The t-shirt company is willing to order more if there is an interest of 12 or more after Saturday.

The walk is open to anyone wishing to participate.

Anyone wishing to make a donation can do so to Pioneer Memorial Home Health and Hospice, P.O. Box 9, Heppner, OR 97836.

Senior Center Menu

Hope/Valby/All Saints church members will be serving lunch on Wednesday, March 18. The menu will include corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, carrots and onions, fruit juice, bread and cake.

Pucker up for Heppner's own "blarney" rock

One observer on the street last Saturday morning opined, "I think it was a leprechaun! A big one, but a leprechaun, for sure! He had red hair, twinkling eyes, a mischievous smile."

And the "leprechaun" did deliver something that looks like it could have come straight from Ireland.

So the observer on the street's assessment might be as good an explanation as any for the appearance of the "blarney" rock between the post office and Hayden Dentistry, were it not for some delving into the mystery.

Further investigation has identified Ryan Miller as the gift-giver of the huge boulder requested by a representative of the St. Patrick's Weekend Committee. This donation by Miller adds another Irish facsimile to enhance the atmosphere of the celebration and, possibly, to create a wee source of revenue for the coffers.

"Many of our visitors cannot go to Ireland, where they might kiss the Blarney Stone, but now they can kiss Heppner's rock with hopes of being granted the gift of eloquence," a committee member explained. "We hope that everyone this weekend will give it a try and hope everyone will make a donation to our fund for this one-of-a-kind Oregon experience."

In explaining the origin of the term "blarney," online sources generally offer the following: During the time of Queen Eliza-



Ryan Miller of Miller & Sons donated and delivered rocks to their locations in Heppner. The "blarney" rock is located between the Post Office and Hayden Dentistry. The other rocks are located at the Henry Heppner plaque. —Contributed Photos

beth I, Dermot McCarthy, the ruler of Blarney Castle, was required to surrender his fortress to the Queen as proof of his loyalty. He said he would be delighted to do so, but something always happened at the last moment to prevent his surrender. His excuses became so frequent and indeed so plausible that the official who had been demanding the castle in the name of the Queen became a joke at the Court. Once, when the eloquent excuses of McCarthy were repeated to the Queen, she said, "Odds bodikins, more Blarney talk!" The term Blarney has thus come to mean the ability to influence and coax with fair, clever, flattering words and soft speech without giving offense.

For over 200 years, world statesmen, literary giants, and legends of the

silver screen have joined the millions of pilgrims climbing the steps to kiss the Blarney Stone and gain the gift of eloquence. Its powers are unquestioned but its story still creates debate. Legends offer at least four sources for the stone that is a block of bluestone built into the battlements of Blarney Castle, about eight kilometers from Cork.

Once upon a time, prior to the installation of safeguards, the kiss was performed with real risk to life and limb, as participants were grasped by the ankles and dangled bodily over the battlements. In the Sherlock Holmes radio dramatization "The Adventure of the Blarney Stone" (first broadcast March 18, 1946) a man attempting to kiss the Blarney Stone falls to his death. Holmes's investigation reveals

this as a murder; the man's boots having been surreptitiously greased before the attempt.

In actual fact, according to an Irish information website, one day a visitor broke from the grasp of his friends and went hurtling downward to certain death. Since that time the stone has been kissed by another method. First, the persons sit with their backs towards the stone and then someone sits upon their legs or firmly holds their feet. Next, leaning far back and downward into the abyss while grasping the iron rails, the persons lower themselves until their heads are even with the stone to be kissed. (Heppner's source of Irish eloquence will be easier to kiss, either on one's back on the ground or simply by standing and bending down.)

The rewards from the kiss are said to be great. Some people who might want to kiss the rock this weekend: those participants in the Brogue Contest at the KUMA Coffee Hour on Saturday morning. Trying to persuade that "certain someone" to go on a date? A kiss of the Rock couldn't hurt. Though this is not an election year, Heppner's visiting politicians might benefit from a kiss of the rock. The list goes on and on, and the Weekend Committee hopes that the line of kissers willing to pucker up and donate to help keep this celebration going next year will go on and on, too.

"Homecoming" to be held Thursday

Everyone is welcome to attend a "Homecoming," a new stage production, on Thursday this week in Heppner.

This year's Thursday production at the St. Patrick Parish Hall will begin with dessert served by the St. Patrick Altar Society at 7 p.m. The one-act play "Homecoming" will begin at approximately 7:20 p.m.

This year's play written by Fr. Gerry Condon is different from his five previous scripts in that the action occurs in a contemporary setting. Another new feature in this year's production is the plot transition that reflects co-writer Joe Lindsay's innovation, a twist that takes the Heppner Grand Hotel visitors into another realm.

The stage presentation is free to the public. Freewill donations will be given to a local, charitable organization that the cast and crew will select.

Red Hat Rowdies plan trip to Richland tea garden

The Heppner Red Hat Rowdies will meet on March 19 at noon at Sweet Productions for lunch and a brief meeting. The main topic of the meeting is to finalize the plans for a trip to a Richland, WA tea room for high tea.

The trip to the Victorian Tea Garden is scheduled for Thursday, April 9. Reservations for this trip must be made ahead of time by calling Sally Walker at 676-9112. There will only be 20 seats available on the bus, so it will be first come, first serve until April 2.

The bus will be load-

ing at the senior center at 9:45 a.m. and will depart promptly at 10 a.m. to arrive in time for the noon reservation.

The cost for each individual will be \$12.95 plus tax. The tea includes three tier servers with finger sandwiches and/or mini quiches, scones, pastries, desserts, clotted cream, lemon curd and large pots of tea.

If the group would like some time for shopping after tea, time will be scheduled. The bus should be back in Heppner no later than 5 p.m.

Tricycle race to be held Saturday

A tricycle race is scheduled as part of the St. Patrick's weekend in Heppner. All children ages two through five are encouraged to participate in this free event sponsored by the Heppner Day Care and Pre-school board of directors.

The race will be held on Saturday. It will be in the parking area of the Bank

of Eastern Oregon immediately after the 1 p.m. Big Green Parade. Tricycles will be furnished.

The racers will be grouped into a two-and-three-year-olds bracket and into a four-and-five-year-olds bracket.

Prizes will be awarded for the top three places in each of the brackets.

Second annual Irish Boxing Smoker... getting ready to rumble

Plan to attend the second annual Irish Boxing Smoker sponsored by Heppner Chamber of Commerce and UROCK Radio on Friday, March 13, at the Heppner High School gymnasium, starting at 8 p.m. Doors will open at 7 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults through 12 years of age; \$5 for 11-8 years of age and free for 7 and under.

There will be a shuttle bus pick-up and drop-off stop in front of Heppner Family Foods beginning at 6:45 p.m. and will make return trips until all riders are picked up.

Hornyak to speak at Chamber lunch meeting

Will Hornyak will be the guest speaker at this week's Chamber lunch meeting. Hornyak is one of the main entertainers for the Wee Bit O' Ireland event.

Lunch will be served Willow Creek Park District to meet

The Willow Creek Park District will hold a regular park district meeting on March 31 at Heppner City hall at 5p.m.

at noon and he may do his entertaining during the meal. The cost for the meal is \$9 and will be held at John's Place on Main Street.

St. Patrick's Senior Center Breakfast.

Ham, Scrambled Eggs, Biscuits & Gravy, Fruit and Juice \$6.00 Saturday, March 14th 7 a.m. -10 a.m.

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