

SYMBOLS OF IRELAND MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER SAINT PATRICK'S DAY



MARCH 1, 2009

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

CELTIC CROSS
OAKDALE
CEMETERY 2

CELTIC CROSS
GREENWOOD
CEMETERY 2

CELTIC CROSS
COHASSET CEN-
TRAL CEMETERY 2

OLDEST IRISH
HARP 3

W.B. YEATS
AND IRISH
HARP 3

LYRE 3

GRAVESTONE
WITH UNUSUAL
SYMBOL 4

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Shamrock conveys the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost)
- Knots in Celtic tradition ward off evil spirits
- Winged Lion is an attribute of Saint Mark
- Harp conveys link between heaven and earth

SAINT PATRICK

Who is Saint Patrick who we toast with green beer on Saint Patrick's day—March 17? This Liturgical Banner of Saint Patrick is by Jack B. Yeats and was completed in the early 20th Century. It is housed at Saint Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea, County Galway, Ireland.

Saint Patrick is the Patron Saint of Ireland. He was born in the west of Britain in approximately 390 and was Romano-British in origin. At the age of 16, he was seized by pirates and became a slave herding sheep for the next 6 years. During that difficult time, he found God and began to pray and take religion seriously. He escaped from the pirates and returned to Britain a changed man. He trained for the priesthood and in approxi-

mately 432 as a missionary returned to Ireland. During the next 30 years, he diffused Christianity and died approximately 461. After his death, many legends appeared including he drove snakes or evil out Ireland (see snakes at the bottom right corner of the image to the right.) Also, the other legend is that he explained Trinity with the shamrock. Notice, he is holding the shepherd's crook which conveys guidance.



SHAMROCK

According to legend, the way Saint Patrick approached the pre-Christians was by associating the shamrock with the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost.)

Because of that association, the shamrock has become a major symbol of Ireland. It is also a custom that all loyal men

and women of Ireland will wear a shamrock on their lapel March 17 (Saint Patrick's Day.) In flower symbolism, it conveys light heartedness.

The shamrock was traditionally used for its medical property and was a popular motif in the Victorian times.



CELTIC CROSS

The Celtic Cross to the right is from OakDale Cemetery in Wilmington, North Carolina and the photograph is taken by Janet Seapker.

The animals in the middle of the cross are dogs. In the Celtic tradition, dogs are the symbols of loyalty and protective vigilance.

The circle (nimbus) on a Celtic cross is a symbol of Irish Christianity and the sun & eternity. On the three arms and at the top is the Celtic knot which is a symbol of unity and since they have

open circles, the circles are symbol of eternity again.

Also, knots in the Celtic tradition ward off evil spirits. There are three which are the symbol of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost.) In the one on the left, there are three rocks, stones or some other objects which is also a symbol of the Trinity.

Also, rocks piled upon each other in historical cemeteries convey that the person's life who is buried there was built on a firm foundation.

The two figures are symbols

of mother earth because the Celtic tradition started out as Pagan.

The serpents with erect heads are symbols of human wisdom. You will notice that both earth goddesses have two snakes on each side of each figure. Two snakes together is a symbol of death.

Further information about OakDale Cemetery, go to: www.oakdalecemetery.org



ANOTHER CELTIC CROSS

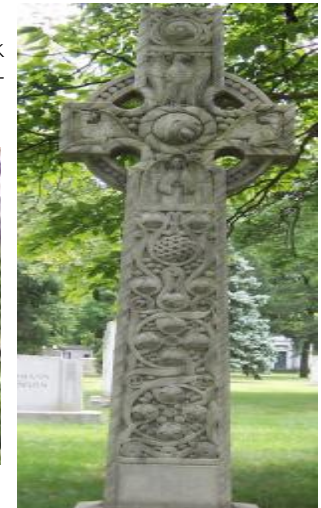
The Celtic Cross to the right is from Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit, MI and the photos are taken by Kim Jacobson. At the top of the cross is the eagle which conveys great strength, speed and soaring flight and is the attribute of Jupiter, who is the supreme God of antiquity. In Christian symbolism, it is the attribute of John, patron saint of Theologians and Publishers.

To the left is a winged lion which is an attribute of Saint Mark. The lion conveys courage and valor.

To the right is a winged ox which is the attribute of Saint Luke. The ox conveys suffering; sacrifice; patience; labor; and agriculture.

The winged man at the bottom is the attribute of Matthew patron saint of tax collectors, customs officers, and security guards. Please note the four saints portrayed are the authors of the first four books of the New Testament. In the middle of the cross is IHS, which is the Greek symbol for Christ.

If you want more information on this cemetery, please look at Arcadia Press' book *Woodlawn Cemetery*.



ONE MORE CELTIC CROSS

This Celtic Cross to the right is from Cohasset Central Cemetery, in Cohasset Cemetery, Cohasset, MA. Notice the ship in the middle which conveys exploration, adventure, travel and enterprise. It is also appropriate to be placed here because it is a coastal cemetery with water only a few feet away.

Notice on each arm of the cross, we see A (Alpha) and O (Omega). These are Greek letters for the beginning and the end; creation and destruction; and Christ. The symbol at the top: XP (Chi Rho) is the Greek word for Christ.

Here's some more information about Cohasset Central

Cemetery from their website: "Overlooking Little Harbor as its terrain slopes to water's edge, Cohasset Central Cemetery is a place of great beauty and peace. Active for almost three centuries and containing about 500 gravestones in its 4.5 acres, markers of slate, marble, and granite are witness to the passage of time and to changing fortune, belief, custom and style."



IRISH HARP

The image to the right is The Brian Boru Harp, 15th or 16th Century and it resides at the Trinity College in Dublin. It is the oldest harp in Ireland and has become an important Irish artistic motif and national symbol. The reason it is so loved by the Irish is because the importance of it goes back to the Celts.

The harp conveys the link between heaven and earth;

contemplation; joy; praise; poetry; music; worship in heaven; sadness; human stress; and suffering. It is the attribute of King David and as a youth, he supposedly played the instrument beautifully. He would play for King Saul to dispel an evil spirit which possessed him. Saint Augustine, in his sermons, relates the ten strings of King David's harp to the Ten Commandments.



ANOTHER IRISH HARP

The work to the right is by Edmund Dulac called *W.B. Yeats and the Irish Theatre*, 1915 at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. "William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), poet, dramatist, and folklorist, was the leader of the Celtic literary revival at the turn of the century. His love of Irish fantasy and folklore is reflected in the charming and mystical tales of *The Celtic Twilight* (page 235—*The Irish*:

A Treasury of Art and Literature.) Notice the harp Mr. Yeats is resting on conveys link between heaven and earth joy; praise; and poetry.

The shamrock above his head conveys the Trinity. The color green conveys youth, freshness, fertility and hope. Note that W.B. Yeats has been turned in to a puppet which conveys man as the play thing of fate and deities.



LYRE

This particular grave marker to the right is in the German Protestant Cemetery, Waldoboro, ME. Closely associated with the Harp is the Lyre but is supposedly a more frivolous instrument than the harp. It conveys divine harmony, musical and poetic inspiration and divination. A three stringed Lyre like the

one to the right, represents the Trinity; a seven stringed one represents the seven planets; and a twelve stringed one represents the zodiac. Notice below the lyre that an Oak tree branch intertwined with a grape vine. The oak tree branch conveys longevity and immortality and the oak leaf itself conveys

bravery, eternity, endurance, honor, and hospitality. The grape vine conveys autumn, royalty and truth. Notice the grape leaf is three parts (Trinity.)



For further information, contact
Richard at rwaterhouse@comcast.net

WATERHOUSE SYMBOLISM

1770 Flagler Avenue NE
Atlanta, GA 30309-2706
E-mail: rwaterhouse@comcast.net



SYMBOLS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

ANOTHER GRAVESTONE WITH AN UNUSUAL SYMBOL

Nancy Vandiver of Atlanta sent me the photo of the gravestone to the far right. Does anyone recognize what symbol is depicted?

It was found in the McEver Family Cemetery (1800's) near White, GA. Nancy believes it is the grave of her great, great (maybe more) Uncle who never married. When they discovered the burial plot, this stone was completely underground and the area was covered by fallen trees that had come down during a previous tornado. Also, some of the

graves were stacked with piles of slate and other stones as seen below. The stacking of stone conveys their life was built on a firm foundation. It also protected



the burials especially in rural cemeteries.



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



In an effort to expand Waterhouse Symbolism into a web site and other ways, I am asking for donations.

Also, if you know of any historic cemeteries or other non-profits that would like me to design a newsletter, give a lecture on symbolism or design a symbolism tour, let me know. One of my favorite things is researching symbols.

Take care,

Richard Waterhouse