

THE GEO-SAMPLER

geotechnics
geotechnical and
geosynthetic testing

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Widely recognized as the Patron Saint of Ireland, St. Patrick was born in Wales in roughly 385 AD. He survived a capture from Britain by Irish raiders at age 14, an escape after six years of captivity and a triumphant return to Ireland, years later, as an ordained bishop. Revered for centuries and the inspiration behind several hundred parades and parties each year, St. Patrick was never actually involved with green beer, green bagels or a dyed-green Chicago River. Or at least that we've been able to discover. But here at the GeoSampler, we're big fans nonetheless.

GOING GREEN FOR NEARLY 400 YEARS

Today's St. Patrick's Day bears some resemblance to the St. Patrick's Day feast that emerged in the early 17th century. In Ireland, people were festooned with green ribbons and the shamrock emerged as an icon. Seems St. Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock itself to explain the Holy Trinity to the pre-Christian people of Ireland. And ever since, March 17th, or thereabouts, has been the day for "the wearing of the green."

But what about the more contemporary celebrations of the holiday? Green face painting, pre-dawn bar crawls, leprechauns and all that?

Well, here in the United States, you have to take a step back to colonial times for the first Saint Patrick's Day Parade in the colonies on March 17, 1737. In fact, it's been running in Boston ever since, making it the oldest shindig in the U.S. In New York City, the first celebration was held on that date in 1766 at the Crown and Thistle Tavern, though this was centuries before the advent of green beer. The holiday reached fever pitch in 1780 when General George Washington, who commanded soldiers of Irish descent, allowed his troops a holiday "as an act of solidarity with the Irish in their fight for independence." So, it was sort of a red, white, blue and green kind of celebration.

Celebrating Green Day

Today, you'll find festivities all over the place, each with a unique spin on incorporating the luck of the Irish.

- Seattle, and other cities, paints the traffic stripes of their parade routes green.
- Chicago dyes its river green, as it has since 1961 when sewer workers used green dye to check for sewer discharges. Though it only lasts a few hours, it's a pretty festive tradition.
- In Indianapolis, the canal is dyed green, as are the fountains of Savannah. Speaking of Savannah, organizers there estimate nearly 400,000 celebrants in attendance at their parade each year. Contrast that with the festivities in Hot Springs, Arkansas, which claims the "World's Shortest St.



Patrick's Day Parade." This isn't surprising as it's held annually on historic Bridge Street, which received notoriety in 1940 when Ripley's *Believe it or Not* designated it the "Shortest Street in the World."

In the Irish neighborhood of Syracuse, Tipperary Hill, visitors will spy the world famous "Green-on-Top" traffic light, which is painted with a shamrock at midnight each year to herald the commencement of festivities.

Officially, New York City has the largest St. Patrick's Day parade in the world, with roughly 150,000 marchers each year, in addition to two million or so spectators, all emblazoned with the color green.

In 2009, CNN recognized Seattle as one of the "Five places to get your green on" in America, as its parade travels along a 1-mile route through the Emerald City's downtown the Saturday before St. Patty's Day. This year, the Right Honorable Desmond Guinness, a direct descendant of Guinness Brewery founder Arthur Guinness, will serve as the parade's grand marshal. Which makes us again consider the link between St. Paddy's Day and, uh, beer.

The Connection with our Lab?

So what's all this green got to do with geotechnical and geosynthetic testing, you may ask? Well, turns out, St. Patrick is the patron saint of engineers. So all of us give a nod to the engineers and firms we're honored to work with every day.

Of course, we probably won't go as far as the Missouri University of Science & Technology, an engineering college in Rolla, MO. There, the celebrations last for a week, complete with a downtown parade, a royal court and city streets painted green. In fact, 2008 marked their 100th such celebration. In previous years, a pit of green liquid—named Alice—was made by students as part of the festivities, according to Wikipedia, and stepping into it was a rite of bravery. In recent years, however, the university put the kibosh on Alice, citing health concerns.

With that said, all our Irish eyes are smiling on you this season. With a tip of the hat and a tip of the ale, we say "Happy O'Holiday" to all our friends.

The Irish gave the bagpipes to the Scots as a joke, but the Scots haven't seen the joke yet.

—Oliver Herford



Cheers

May you live as long as you want, and never want as long as you live.

May the grass grow long on the road to hell for want of use.

As you slide down the banisters of life may the splinters never point the wrong way.

May your troubles be as few and as far apart as my Grandmother's teeth.

May you die in bed at ninety-five years, shot by a jealous husband (or wife).

May you have the hindsight to know where you've been, the foresight to know where you're going and the insight to know when you're going too far.

May the hinges of our friendship never grow rusty.

May you never forget what is worth remembering or remember what is best forgotten.

Here's to the women who love me terribly, may they soon improve.

Here's champagne for our real friends, and real pain for our sham friends!



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COMPLIANT

Leprechauns.

What's up with those guys?

Well, to begin with, they're small. Wee folk as it were. Generally not more than three feet tall. And shoemakers by trade. You can tell them apart from munchkins because leprechauns will be carrying a hammer. And maybe a shoe. Although it's unclear if they make leprechaun shoes or human shoes.

And they generally appear to be old. Well over the drinking age—which is good, because they're also frequently found to be intoxicated. And we're not talking about a couple of green beers here. The drink of choice for leprechauns is something called poteen.

Poteen is a traditional Irish, highly alcoholic beverage (60%-95% alcohol by volume), distilled in a small pot still from malted barley, grain or potatoes, and is one of the strongest alcoholic beverages in the world.

Not content to be just tipsy cobblers, leprechauns have also become self-appointed guardians of some mysterious, ancient treasure, which they have cleverly buried in crocks or pots. The hiding place of these pots has been identified as at the end of rainbows, but that seems to be just a silly myth.

Leprechauns are free spirits, with the emphasis on free. They seem to avoid human contact at all costs. And when caught by

a human, they will offer great treasure in exchange for freedom.

But be advised, these folks have devised monetary schemes that make Bernie Madoff look like a piker. Each leprechaun carries two leather pouches. One pouch holds a silver shilling that magically returns to the pouch every time it is paid out. The other pouch carries a gold coin that he will gladly trade for an opportunity escape. That coin will turn to leaves or ash once the little briber has gone.



Finding leprechauns is no simple task. But modern technology may have finally caught up with the little devils. Within Ireland's County Tipperary—and yes, it's a long way to there—in the shadows of the Silvermine Mountains, lies the Glen of Cloongallon. And within the glen exists a neolithic dolmen, type of single-chamber tomb, consisting of upright stones supporting a large flat horizontal capstone. And, based on a number of mysterious happenings nearby, the glen is highly suspected of being home to a number of supernatural entities—pookas, sheeries, and quite possibly, leprechauns.

To help out those who cannot camp out and wait for the little guys to appear, ireland'seye.com has set up an online leprechaun watch. A video camera attached to a satellite phone connected to the Internet gives all of us the rare opportunity to spy one of the rarest sights in the world—a leprechaun. Or a pooka. But that's a whole other story.

And speaking of things that are difficult to spot:

At Geotechnics, we've devoted a lot of time and effort, equipment and people power to finding ways to locate and resolve leaks in liner systems. Our Liner Integrity program can pinpoint holes of approximately 1 mm in a geomembrane, identifying a tiny problem before it becomes a major issue. For more information call Nate Melaro at 412.823.7600.



Can't Dodge Success

Congratulations to the Geotechnics Dodgeball Team for retaining their championship title in the recent 4th Annual ASCE Young Member Forum Dodgeball Tournament. 26 Teams. All-Day Schedule. Tough competition. Incredible

camaraderie. And some very pleasant conversation and beverages with fellow participants. (A special shout-out to Barber and Hoffman.) Thanks for a great day. And a great reason to get out of the lab!



Our two facilities serve projects across the country.

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