

Real Life Safety Heroes: St. Patrick



St. Patrick, the figure we celebrate on March 17th, is associated with many Irish symbols like the shamrock and the gift of gab. But, alas, he lived quite an unfortunate life.

Born somewhere along the British coastline in the 4th century, Patrick was captured during a raiding party when he was 14 years old, taken to Ireland, and sold as a slave. While tending the flocks of a Druid chieftain, Patrick spent much of his time alone and in prayer, strengthening his Christian faith. After 6 years of captivity, Patrick escaped, returned home, and took up studies for the priesthood. He later returned to Ireland and began a 40-year mission of converting its people. He died on March 17th sometime in the late fifth century.

Legend has it that St. Patrick rid Ireland of snakes by driving them into the ocean. If this is true, it would add one more claim to St. Patrick's fame: status as one of the world's earliest industrial hygienists. Unfortunately, it's probably **not** true. According to scientists, there were no snakes in post-glacial Ireland.

The whole banishment of serpents legend is thus best understood as an allegory symbolizing St. Patrick's purging Ireland of pagans. Still, it's worth noting that Ireland remains one of the only countries in the world without snakes

living in the wild.

By Glenn Demby