



IRISH MYTHS & LEGENDS

**English National School
Comenius Project 2011 – 2013**

“Your culture and traditions help me to appreciate mine”



Introduction

Eglish National School is participating in the Comenius Project 2011 – 2013. The title of this project is

“Your culture and tradition help me to appreciate mine”.

We are in partnership with

- Ceip Carmen Arias, a primary school in Socuellamos. This school is situated in the province of Ciudad Real, in the region of Castilla La Mancha, which is located to the South East of Madrid and
- Circolo Didattico Rignano Sull’ Arno which is an institute consisting of four primary schools and three pre – primary schools, located in the town of Rignano Sull’ Arno in Tuscany, Italy, twenty kilometers South East of Florence.

As part of this project, each school has produced a book of myths and legends from their own country and their own local region. All of the pupils from the junior Infant class up to 6th class of Eglis National School came together to collect these stories from our local area.

There are several different versions of many Irish stories, so some of the stories have been written more than once, as the children have each written their own version.

This is just a small sample of the many myths and legends we are lucky enough to have here in Ireland. Storytelling has always been an integral part of Irish culture and the “Seanchaí” or storyteller was a very welcome visitor to any Irish home since ancient times.

The pupils have collected a selection of their own favourite stories. This is our collection. We hope you enjoy it!

Grateful thanks to all the staff and pupils of Eglis National School, who worked hard to put this book together.

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Deirdre of the sorrows. *by Alana Mulry*

A girl-child was born to Siobha on the night of a full moon. Her proud father, Feidhlim cradled her gently in his arms and named her Deirdre. He took her to the druids and asked them to foretell his infant's future. The druids looked towards the stars and glanced sadly at the newborn. "What do you see?" Feidhlim asked the druids anxiously. They answered "This child will cause great trouble. She will grow up to be the most beautiful woman in Ulster but she will cause the death of many of our men."

When the Red Branch Knights heard the druid's prognosis, they were uneasy and wanted the child immediately killed. They journeyed to the King and urged him to take action. King Connor was reluctant to take the child's life and came up with a plan. "Deirdre will be reared far away from here and when she comes of age, I will make her my bride." This was deemed a satisfactory solution all round and King Connor set about finding an appropriate guardian for the child. He sent her deep into the forest to stay with a wise old woman called Leabharcham, who would care for and teach her.

As foretold by the druids, Deirdre grew to be a beautiful, though lonely young woman. One night Leabharcham discovered she had been sleepwalking and watched over her for the remainder of the night. When she awoke in the morning, Deirdre told Leabharcham of a dark-haired warrior who had been in her dreams for a month. "He is tall and handsome with raven-black hair. His skin is snow-white and he is fearless in battle." Leabharcham recognised Naoise, one of the sons of Uisneach from this description and her brow furrowed with worry. "He is Naoise, one of the sons of Uisneach but you must not mention your dream to a soul. You are to be married to King Connor."

Deirdre begged Leabharcham to send for Naoise so that she might meet the man of her dreams. Leabharcham refused at first, but seeing how unhappy Deirdre was, she quickly relented. Deirdre and Naoise met and fell in love at once. "I cannot marry Connor now" Deirdre said, "We must flee Ulster straight away." They set off and travelled all over Ireland but no one would help them, fearing the wrath of King Connor. Finally, they set sail and settled on an island off the coast of Scotland.

They lived happily on the island for five years until one autumnal evening, a messenger arrived from the King. The messenger conveyed King Connor's forgiveness and asked Deirdre and Naoise to return home. Deirdre didn't trust the King and wanted to stay on the island but Naoise believed the news and began to prepare for the journey home. They set off shortly afterwards but Deirdre had a sense of foreboding and begged him to turn back. Naoise reasoned with her, promising that everything would be fine. When they arrived, they were sent to the fortress of the Red Branch Knights instead of directly to the castle and Deirdre was convinced they were walking into a trap.

No sooner had they entered the fortress than they were surrounded. Naoise and his brothers fought bravely but they were outnumbered. They were captured and brought before the King. "Who will kill these traitors for me?" asked the King. None of the Red Branch Knights would kill a fellow knight. Suddenly an unknown warrior from another kingdom stepped forward and cut the heads off Naoise and his brothers with a single sweep of his sword. So great was Deirdre's sorrow that her heart broke and she fell upon Naoise's body joining him in death. Deirdre's father left Ulster for Connaught and joined Queen Maeve in many bloody battles against the Red Branch Knights. Deirdre had brought sorrow and trouble to Ulster just as the druids foretold.

Fionn MacCumhaill and the salmon of knowledge

by Luke Casserly

Fionn MacCumhaill was a magical giant who lived near the river Boyne.

According to Irish legend, Fionn met a leprechaun near the river Boyne and studied under him. The leprechaun was always on the lookout for a certain salmon.

One sunny day, the leprechaun finally caught the salmon and put it on the spit to cook.

He left Fionn in charge of the fish, while he went about doing his work. He gave Fionn strict instructions not to eat the fish while he was gone.

Fionn watched the fish cooking, and saw a blister rise on the skin of the fish. He burst the blister on the fish with his thumb, and, in doing so, burned his finger, and put his thumb into his mouth to soothe the pain.

As the taste of the fish reached Fionn's lips, he suddenly found that he knew the answer to any question.

When the leprechaun got back, he was furious to find that Fionn had the benefit of the "salmon of knowledge" which he had been searching for for many years.

Fionn went on to become leader of the "Fianna" and was a great Irish hero. He met his famous wife Sadhbh, when he was out hunting, one day. They had a son, Oisín, who went off to the land of "Tír na nÓg" with the fairy princess Niamh.

THE SALMON OF Knowledge



The Salmon of Knowledge

by Mary McDonnell

There once was a man called Finn and he had a servant called Fionn MacCumhail.

Finn had caught a fish. It was a very special fish, called the salmon of knowledge.

Finn gave the fish he had caught to Fionn and said “Cook this for me, please, and do not eat it!”

Fionn did as he was told and cooked the fish over an open fire.

As the fish was cooking, Fionn put his thumb on it to see if it was cooked and he burned his thumb. He sucked his thumb to ease the pain. Little did he know that this would give him knowledge!

Fionn gave the salmon to Finn, but Finn could see the knowledge in Fionn’s eyes and so he told Fionn to eat the rest of the fish.

So for the rest of his life, whenever Fionn needed the answer to any question, all he had to do was suck his thumb!



The Banshee

by Pat Corcoran

In Ireland, the Banshee, who is supposed to be a fairy woman (bean, woman; sidhe, fairy) is said to wail and cry when members of certain families are about to die. It has never been established, however, why this ghostly creature follows some families.

In Old Gaelic legend, music and poetry were said to be fairy gifts and the possession of these was said to show a fatal kinship with the 'Duine Shee', or people of the spirit race.

Carolan, the great Irish harper - so runs the story - obtained some of the wildest and most beautiful music through hearing the fairy harpers play while lying asleep in the moonlight on a fairy mound.

The Banshee is believed to be an unearthly attendant on the ancient families of Ireland, the true descendants of the noble Gaelic race - those who have the Mac and O to their names - for:

By Mac and O
You'll always know
True Irishmen they say'.
But if they lack
The O and Mac,
No Irishmen are they'.

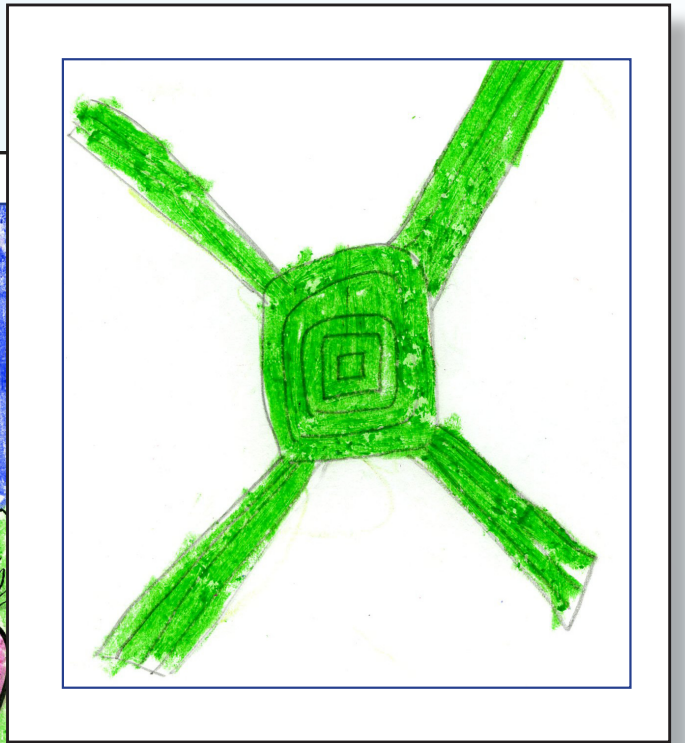
And the families with the old names of the chieftains of the Gaels, such as the O'Neills, the O'Donnells, the O'Connors, the O'Learys, the O'Tools and the O'Connaghs, each had their banshee whose cry, when heard by any of them, was a forewarning of death.

In Ireland, those persons who have the gifts of music and song are, it is said, watched over by the spirits; one the Spirit of Life, which is prophecy, such persons are said to be 'fey' and to have the gift of the second sight; the other, the Spirit of Doom, which is the revealer of secrets of misfortune and death, and for this dread messenger, another name is the Banshee.

The wail of the Banshee is a peculiarly mournful sound that resembles the melancholy sound of the hollow wind, and having the tone of the human voice, and is distinctly audible at a great distance.

She is usually presented as a small, though beautiful maiden, dressed in the fashion of Ireland's early ages who, with her mournful and melancholy cry, bewails the misfortune about to fall on the family she loves.

It has been stated by some writers that the Banshee was actuated by a feeling inimic to the person lamented. This, however was not the opinion of the people of an earlier day in Ireland.



St. Brigid's Cloak

Brigid lived in Ireland at the time of St. Patrick. She listened to St. Patrick and became a Christian. Brigid was the daughter of a wealthy man. She was also his slave. She spent her days cooking, cleaning and looking after animals on her father's farm. When Brigid was eighteen she no longer worked as a slave. Her father wanted her to find a husband. But Brigid's mind was made up. She did not want a husband. Brigid wanted to spend her life working for God. She spent all her time looking after the poor, the sick and the elderly. Young girls from all over Ireland came to join her. They wanted to help her in doing her good works.

Brigid needed to find a home for all the girls. She went to the King of Leinster to ask him for some land. She wanted to build a home. The king refused Brigid's request. He would not give away any of his land. However, Brigid did not get upset, instead she said a little prayer to God. She asked God to soften the King's heart. Then she smiled at the King and said "will you give me as much land as my cloak will cover? The king was amused. He thought it was a joke. Brigid's cloak was so small that it would only cover a tiny piece of land. The king laughed out loud and just for fun he agreed. With that Brigid removed her cloak and spread it out on the ground. Then she asked four friends to hold a corner of the cloak. Brigid then instructed them to walk in opposite directions. One walked to the north and one to the south. Another walked to the east while the fourth walked to the west. The cloak immediately began to grow in size. The king was astonished. The cloak grew and grew until it covered many acres of land. The king knelt before Brigid. "From this moment on", he said, "anything you ask for, I will gladly give to you." Soon afterwards, the king became a Christian and gave much to the poor. Brigid's miracle of the cloak was the first of many miracles that she worked for the people of Ireland.



Oisín and Tír na nóg

Oisín was the son of Finn MacCumhaill. He was also one of the best-loved poets in Ireland. People came from every province to hear him read and sing.

One day a beautiful young maiden came to hear his poems. She had bright blue eyes and long golden hair. She rode the finest white horse that was ever seen in Ireland. Her name was princess Niamh. She had travelled very far from Tír na nóg. Tír na nóg was a magical land far out beyond the western sea. In this land, no one ever grew old. It was a land where the sun never set and the rain never fell. Tír na nóg was the land of eternal happiness.

Day after day, Niamh listened to Oisín's poems and songs. Soon she fell in love with him. Oisín fell in love with Niamh and they were both very happy. Soon the time came for Niamh to return to Tír na nóg. She begged Oisín to go with her. Oisín agreed to go because he loved Niamh so dearly. There was much sadness when the people of Ireland waved goodbye to Oisín and Niamh.

Before long the great white horse was carrying them off to the west. When they reached the coast of Connemara the horse galloped over the waves and off out to sea. In no time at all they reached the magical land of Tír na nóg.

The king and queen of Tír na nóg welcomed Oisín to his new home.

The next day Niamh and Oisín were married. Both Oisín and Niamh were very happy.

When one year had gone by Oisín wanted to visit Ireland one more time. He wanted to see his father. Oisín told Niamh of his plan. She was deeply troubled. She feared Oisín might never return from Ireland. When Oisín promised he would return, Niamh agreed to let him go. " Be very careful", warned Niamh, "and do not touch the ground in Ireland. If you do, you will never again return to Tír na nóg".

When it was time for Oisín to go, Niamh warned him again. Niamh was very sad as she waved goodbye to Oisín. Before long, Oisín and the great white horse were on their way back to Ireland. Soon the coast of Connemara came into view. When they reached Ireland, Oisín could not recognise the land. Everything had changed. The great Fianna fortresses were in ruins. They were overgrown with briars and brambles.

Oisín asked about Fionn and the Fianna. "They have been dead for hundreds of years" the people told him.

Then Oisín understood what had happened. One day in Tír na nÓg was the same as a year in Ireland. Oisín had been away for more than three hundred years.

Sadly, he turned back for Tír na nÓg. On the way he met some men struggling to move a heavy stone. The men asked Oisín to help.

Oisín reached down from his saddle and picked up the stone with one hand. The men were astonished at Oisín's great strength.

Suddenly, the saddle girth snapped. Oisín fell from the horse. The moment he touched the ground, he changed.

He turned into a withered old man.

The great white horse was frightened and galloped back to Tír na nÓg and was never seen in Ireland again.

Tír na nÓg

By Geraldine Corcoran

Once there lived a man named Oisín who was a member of the Fianna. One day as they were out hunting, they saw a beautiful young girl on a mystical white horse riding swiftly towards them. When she approached them, she said 'My name is Niamh and my father is King of Tír na nÓg'. She asked Oisín to come to Tír na nÓg with her and he couldn't refuse. It was love at first sight.



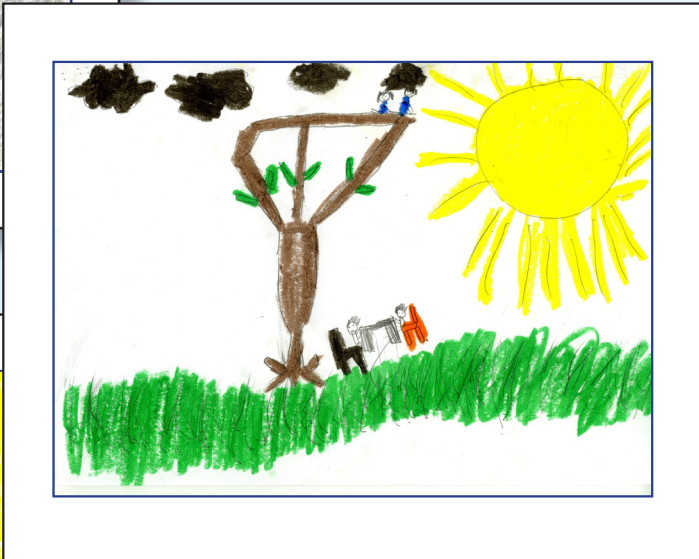
Niamh said that they would only be a few years in Tír na nÓg but it turns out they were there for 300 years. Oisín felt homesick so he went back to Ireland. When he got to Ireland everything was gone. He was going back to Tír na nÓg, when the horse bumped into a huge rock. He was bending over to pick up the rock and fell off the horse and when his feet touched Irish soil he turned 300 years



old and died.

Legends say Niamh still looks for her true love Oisín.





Diarmuid and Grainne

Long long ago in the time of the Fianna their lived a princess called Grainne. She was the most beautiful woman in all of Ireland. Grainne was the daughter of King Cormac of Ireland. They lived in the palace at Tara in co. Meath.

Diarmuid was one of the Fianna. He was a great friend of Oisín and his father Fionn Mac Cumhaill. Diarmuid had curly black hair, a slender body and a mole on his forehead, above his brow. It was said that any girl who looked at Diarmuid would fall in love with him because this mole had magic loving powers. Fionn Mac Cumhaill, leader of the Fianna. He wanted to marry Grainne. Fionn Mac Cumhall went to the palace at Tara to ask King Cormac for his daughter's hand in marriage. King Cormac was happy with this arrangement. The king agreed to have a feast to celebrate their engagement.

Unfortunately, Grainne was not in love with Fionn. He was too old for her. While Fionn was asking the king for her hand in marriage, Grainne fell in love with Diarmuid. While the feast was being prepared, Grainne made a magic sleeping potion for all the guests. Immediately they fell asleep.

Diarmuid and Grainne galloped off in the middle of the night. They were in hiding for fifteen years. They slept in caves, under trees and behind big rocks.

One day Diarmuid and Grainne saw Fionn and Oisín coming over the hills on horseback. They hid up a tree but Oisín and his father rested under that very same tree. After a short time they started to play chess. Oisín who was a great friend of Diarmuid, was losing the game. Diarmuid tried to help him by dropping berries down from the tree. At that very moment Oisín and his father looked up and saw Diarmuid and Grainne looking down at them.

Diarmuid had magic powers which he got from his father. He covered Grainne in a mist so she could escape and not be harmed. Diarmuid was a warrior, and he escaped by leaping from tree to tree, crossing rivers and he ran for seven days away from the wrath of Fionn.

Many years later, Diarmuid and Grainne heard that Fionn had become mild mannered. They had a daughter of fifteen years, and they decided to go and show Fionn and the Fianna their girl and beg for forgiveness.

Fionn welcomed them graciously. He ordered a great feast. He asked Diarmuid to kill a wild boar. What he did not tell Diarmuid, was that the boar's bristles were poisonous. Sadly Diarmuid died. Grainne was heartbroken. Grainne still had to marry Fionn. She loved Diarmuid all her life and died of a broken heart.

Balor of the Evil Eye

One day, many years ago before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there lived in Ireland a race of people called Tuatha De Danann. They were descendants of the Goddess of Danu. They had many gifts of magic. These people were tall and good-looking. They loved music and poetry and they were druids. They had a king called Nuada.

The Formorians were fierce, evil warriors that lived in Northern Ireland on a group of islands. They were bandit sailors that stole cattle and snatched children to rear as slaves. They were great sailors and fearless of the sea.

Balor was the evil one-eyed fierce King of the Formorians. He was known as Balor of the evil eye, Balor used the power in his eye to kill his enemy. It killed them because there was magic in Balor's eye. Every time he looked at someone, they died.

Balor never visited Ireland, but sent his soldiers on bloody raids to Ireland to attack the Tuatha De Danann. Balor introduced taxes and if the Tuatha De Danann did not pay taxes Balor would order his soldiers to cut off their noses.

Every year on the Hill of Tara the Tuatha De Danann handed over a pot of gold to the Formorians. One day while the exchange was taking place a great warrior called Lugh came over the Hill of Tara. He was Lugh of the Long Arm,



famed throughout ten kingdoms for his good deeds and bravery. He was a fierce warrior. (He was the foster son of Manannán Mac Lir, the god of the sea.) His foster father gave him a special sword that could cut through iron and a boat that could travel over land and sea. Lugh was a good person. King Nuada knew about this man. He welcomed him and asked him to stay. King Nuada told Lugh about King Balor and the Formorians. Lugh informed the king that he knew about these people.

Lugh began to tell his story. "You have nothing to fear. I am his grandson," said Lugh. His mother was Balor's only child. A druid had told Balor that he would be killed by his grandson. King Balor had a daughter named Eithlinn. On her thirteenth birthday, he locked Eithlinn in a tower so that men could not see her, so she would not marry and have children. King Balor would be safe. One day, along came a man called Cian from the Tuatha De Dannan. He had been in a shipwreck. He swam ashore and stayed the night in a cave. He heard Eithlinn singing. He climbed up the tower where Eithlinn was a prisoner. They fell in love. Cian returned to Ireland. Eithlinn was expecting a baby and gave birth to a son.

When king Balor found out, he was raging. He ordered one of his warriors to throw the baby into the sea. The warrior was kind, so he build a raft. Days later the baby

was safely found by Manannán Mac Lir and that baby was called Lugh.

Lugh told King Nuada that he would help him and the Tuatha De Danann. The morning of the battle was clear and sunny. It was too hot for the Formorians who lived in such a cold place. By noon, many bodies lay dead on the ground. One of his best Formorians died. Balor went mad! 'Raise my eyelids' said Balor.

Lugh threw a spear and pierced the very pupil of Balor's eye and pushed the eye out through the back of Balor's skull. As it fell, the eye lighted on a thousand Fomorians and killed them before it lost its glitter and came to rest on the ground.

The Formorians no longer wanted to fight and went home. King Nuada took care of his wounded people. The evil eye was found and chopped up as food for king Nuada's hounds. Lugh of the Long Arm became a great hero in Ireland.

Grace O'Malley (Gráinne Mhaol)

Gráinne Mhaol lived during the 16th century (1530) and was born into a noble family, near Clew Bay in Co. Mayo. They also had land on Clare Island. Her father was a Chieftain. Gráinne was a headstrong girl. Her family were a seafaring family.

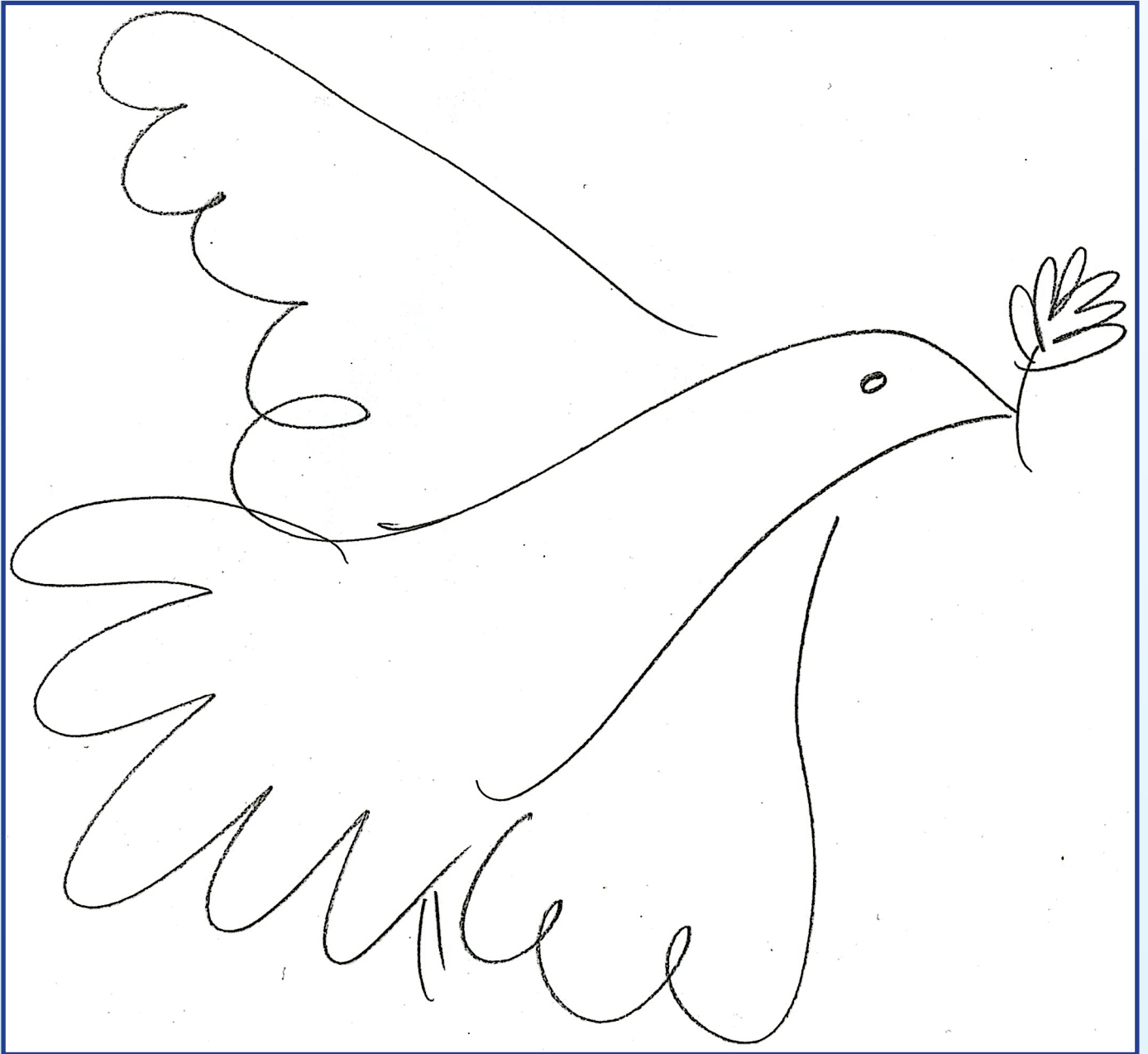
Aged eight, Gráinne insisted on being a sailor, but her father would not bring her because she was a girl. So she shaved off her hair and dressed in boys' clothes. She became a fierce pirate. She was one of the most successful pirates ever to sail the seas off the west coast of Ireland. She had a fleet of ships and over two hundred men. She robbed the contents of any ship that sailed on Irish waters. She charged a fee to other sailors for a safe voyage. Gráinne was also a trader and she often sailed her ships as far as Spain. She traded fish and cattle hides for wine, salt and iron.

She married Chieftain O'Flaherty when she was only 16. He was rich. When he died, she married Chieftain Burke. She had four children. He was rich but he later died. In those days, women were not allowed to own property or worldly possessions. After her husband's death, she was not legally allowed to own her husband's riches. Gráinne, being the headstrong fierce woman that she was, travelled to the queen of England and demanded that she be allowed



to keep her husband's riches. The queen recognised that she was a fierce woman and gave in to her and allowed her to keep half of both of her husbands' riches. This made her a very wealthy woman.

She spent her later life guarding the western coast of Ireland trying to keep the English out. During her life Galway was a very busy and important port. She was not allowed into Galway city because it was under British rule. She lived a long life and died in 1603. She was a very rich lady. She was the greatest female pirate and trader that ever lived in Ireland. This was usually a man's role.



THE ENGLISH DOVE

by Liam McDonnell

One day in English abbey at 2 o'clock, a Dove landed on top of the shelter.

People came from miles around to see this magical Dove. However, the landlord became angry at the Dove and tried to kill it.

He shot the dove many times but the dove did not die.

Then, the landlord learned that the only way to kill the dove was with a silver bullet.

So he made a silver bullet and killed the dove.

However, when he was riding home that day he and his horse both died.



Setanta was a happy child who played hurling with his friends. His team always won. When Setanta was ten, he said to his father "I want to be a Red Branch Knight" but his father said that he was still too young. One night a man came to the house to tell stories. Setanta liked those stories and set off for King Connors castle. When he got there, there was a hurling game on so he jumped right in and his team won. The other team didn't like it. This caught the king's attention, so he had a chat with Setanta until he said "I am going to a party later would you like to come"? "Later on I will come as I'm playing hurling" replied Setanta, so the king told him where it was and set off. Around an hour later, Setanta followed. When Setanta arrived at the party he couldn't see anyone, so he headed towards the doors. Just then a big black hound jumped out at him and attacked him. Setanta had brought his hurley and sliotar (ball), so he hit it at the hound and killed it. Just then, the king came out. He sighed and said "I am glad that you're ok, but sad that my hound died." At this, Setanta frowned, and said "I will be your guard until you find a new hound. And that is how Setanta got the nickname "Cú Chullainn", which means "the hound of Cullainn".

Cuchulainn - Irish Story and Legend of Cú Chulainn

By David Martin

Long ago, a king called Conor MacNessa had warriors called the Red Branch Knights.

One knight. He trained them to be strong men. King Conor also had a nephew called Setanta who wanted to be a Red Branch knight. One night he said to his mother, “I want to be a Red Branch Knight.” But she said he was too young. Setanta was a happy child who played the game of hurling [the national sport of Ireland like lacrosse or field hockey] with his

friends. His team always won. When Setanta was ten he said to his father, “I want to join the Red Branch Knights.” His father said he was still too young. So he stayed on milking cows, carrying water to his house and chopping wood.

One night a man came to the house to tell stories. He told lots about King Conor and his knights. That night, while everyone was asleep, Setanta got his hurling stick and ball

and left for King Conor's castle . It was a long trip but when he got there, a hurling match was on. Setanta joined in and the other boys did not like it because he was such a good hurler. He went to meet King Conor and King Conor said he could stay.

Some days later, the king said to Setanta, "I am going to a party at Culain's, do you want to come?" Setanta replied, "I will come later as I am playing a hurling match." Later that night he set off. It was a long trip. He got to the fort and found a wolfhound guarding the fort. He hit the ball and killed Culain's hound. The man heard the dog's cry and ran out. He said, "I am sorry to see my dog go but glad you are okay.

But who is going to guard my house now?" "I'll be your guard dog until you can replace the one I killed. I'll be the "Hound of Culain" ["CuChulain"]," said Setanta.

So that's how **Cuchulainn** got his name.

Soon he became the best guard of all and joined the knights. He was the best Red Branch Knight ever.



The Children Of Lir

by Katie Fitzgerald

Long ago there was a king in Ireland whose name was Lir. He had four children who were the light of his heart, each more beautiful than the other:



Twin boys with hair as yellow as the sun, and twin girls with black hair shining like a secret pool at midnight. But only one thing marred the children's happiness. Their mother, Queen Aobh, had given her own life when the girls were born.

To ease their loneliness King Lir wed Aobh's sister whose name was Aoife. Aoife was fair to look at, but her beauty hid an evil heart. As time wore on and she bore no child, Aoife grew jealous of her sisters children and plotted against them, for hers was the power of darkness. When the King was away from home, she called the children to her. "Come," she said, "let us picnic in the woods and take our ease away from the prying eyes, for today the day will be as long as the night, and light and darkness have equal claim upon the earth."

She led them into the forest where she spread a feast on white linen and bade them eat. No sooner that they raised the golden cups to their lips than they felt themselves change. No longer were they youths and maidens, but four swans who gazed at each other with wild fear and disbelief.

Aoife's voice rose in a triumphant, gloating shout. "Swans you are and swans you shall remain for three times three hundred years, or until the Man of the North shall be joined with the Woman of the South."



The words fell on the hearts of the children like stone, for they knew such a joining could never happen. The Man of the North and the Woman from the South were the names of twin mountain peaks that stood at the ocean boundaries of their father's kingdom. Unless the very earth should move, the peaks could never join.

Aoife gave a satisfied nod. Then she continued, "I grant that on this day every year when light and darkness are equal, you will regain human form and speech. But on that day your feet may not touch the earth or you will surely die."

She laughed, "I will give you one gift: You shall have voices so lovely that you will be hunted as treasures for the sweetness of your song."

The four swans took to the air, keening a wild lament.

Men in the fields ceased their plowing to gaze in wonder. Women at the hearth or rocking the cradle felt their hearts touched with a sorrow too great to be borne.



One day a year later as Lir was walking near a lake, he saw four swans that looked very hungry. So he took some bread from his bag and fed it to the swans. As soon as they ate they turned back into humans. They told Lir all that happened and Lir banished Aoife from the land.

After three hundred years, the spell was broken and the children turned back into humans and slowly died.

The End



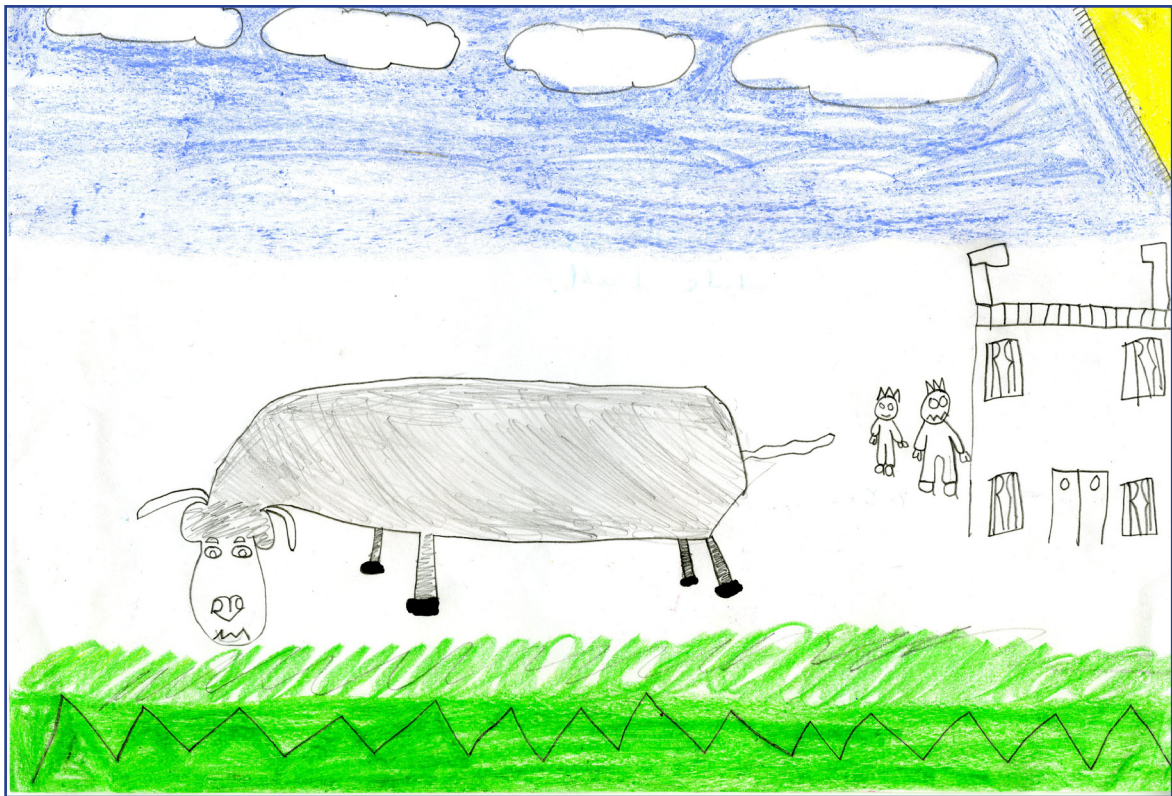
THE SWAN WOMAN OF BOYNE

By Edward Corcoran and Jamie Kennedy

On one special occasion, as the poet Erard Mac Cossi was standing on the bank of the river Boyne, he saw a flock of wild swans flying past very near him. Taking up a big round stone, he flung it into the middle of them and hit one on the white wing, so that it fell to the solid ground helpless and fluttering, while the others flew off.

The poet ran as fast as he could to catch it, but when he came up he found it was not a swan but a woman dressed in white. As soon as he had recovered from his shock, he spoke to her and asked how it happened that she had been flying about in the shape of a swan. She replied that some short time before, she had a sudden heavy fit of illness, and that she grew quickly worse, till one day, when she was lying at death's door, a number of demons came into the house and carried her off softly, while it appeared to her friends that she had died. She and the demons took the shape of swans, and from that moment she remained flying about with them from place to place, till the poet set her free by a lucky accident.

Mac Cossi then brought her to her house and treated her with respect, and after a little while restored her to her acquaintances.



An Táin

By Ciara Cusack

Once there was a queen called Maeve and she was queen of a beautiful place in Ireland called Connacht. Maeve was a fierce and powerful woman. She was jealous of her husband Ailill.

They were always furiously fighting about who had more riches, herself or her husband. They were equal in wealth, but for one thing she didn't have. It was a fierce bull called the great white bull of Connacht. It belonged to Ailill.

Ailill was boasting about this mighty bull, so she asked one of her knights was there any other bulls like the great bull of Connacht in Ireland. He said there was a bull called the brown bull of Cooley which was to be found in Ulster. So Queen Maeve sent out a messenger to Ulster.

The messenger asked the owner, a wrinkled old man, if Queen Maeve could have the bull for one year. The messenger explained "if he didn't give her the bull she will take it by force anyway" then the old man said not in a million years would he give away his bull!!! Queen Maeve was furious when she heard the news so she set off to Ulster with her army to get the brown bull of Cooley.



At that time the red branch nights were under a spell but Cúchullain was not, because his father was a member of the fairylike tuath De Dana

One by one, Maeve's army marched loudly out to battle and one by one Cúchullain killed them. In the end, there was one man left and he was Cúchullain's best friend, Ferdia. They fought for the three days and three nights, but on the morning of the fourth day Cúchullain killed Ferdia. Cúchullain was so sad that he killed his best friend and he went back to the red branch nights with a broken heart.

So Maeve took advantage of Cúchullain's broken heart and stole the brown bull. When she brought it home, the two bulls had a massive fight and in the end the brown bull won, so she sent it back to Ulster, but on the way it died. So Queen Maeve and king Ailill called it even.



Myths and Legends

By Andrew Lyons

The secret tunnel of Eglis: a tunnel that goes from Eglis Abbey to Ahascragh. Only a blind man can see it.

The Land of youth (Tír na nÓg): Oisín was a handsome young man who belonged to the Fianna. The Fianna were made up of the greatest heroes of the land who fought great battles and held great contests. Oisín was the one who could run faster, jump higher and could hunt better than the others. While out hunting he met the most beautiful princess named Niamh riding on a magical great white horse. They fell in love and Niamh asked him to go back to her land the Tír na nÓg where no one ever grows old or get sick. Oisín agreed and they set out across the seas where they married and they celebrated and hunted every day. Gradually Oisín began to miss his friends and so he pleaded with Niamh to go back. She sent him the magical horse but made him promise that he could never get off the horse. On giving his promise Oisín set off then rode across the seas to find that Ireland had changed a lot. Those he knew were long dead and gone. Sadly he turned for home but on the way he met a group of men who were trying to lift a big boulder. He tried to help them by lifting it with one hand but the saddle broke and he fell onto the ground. Instantly he turned into a 300 year old man. He understood what Niamh had warned him "If you set your foot on the ground you will grow old and can never return to the Land of Youth."

People believe that Daly's grove is haunted. A man was trying to fix the church roof in Daly's grove house. He believed it was haunted and ran away screaming, leaving his tools behind him.

