



the freeBIRD

VOLUME II

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The Freebird is the newsletter of the Irish Fair of Minnesota. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.

HURLERS GEAR UP FOR A SEASON OF FAST PLAY

The crowd yelled and swayed at every clash of sticks and bodies, necks swiveled and craned and eyes were glued to the instant replays, shown in slow motion, to try to follow the flight of the ball. This was the ancient Celtic sport of Hurling, one of the world's fastest-paced team sports, played before a riveted crowd of 7,000 new enthusiasts at half-time of the Swarm game; the athletes, members of the Robert Emmets Hurling Club, doing a demonstration of their beloved sport.

The Club, which is only a year old, has quickly made a splash in the Irish community in Minnesota, and the club's success has led to its already being fully associated under the North American Gaelic Athletic Association. This month they will be taking a traveling team to a tournament in Chicago, and they've already got their eyes on participation in the National Championship in Philadelphia this September.



Robert Emmets Hurling Club Demo at the 2005 Irish Fair of Minnesota on Harriet Island

Hurling teams consist of 15 players a side and is played with a sticks (called hurleys) and a ball. The ball can be played along the ground or struck great distances through the air, with the object of shooting past the goalkeeper or shooting the ball high over the crossbar between the posts. Opposing goalposts are 150 yards apart and, because of the quickness of the sport, fitness of the players is vital, and the risk of injury from the swinging hurleys quite real.

"To watch the game played at the highest level, one wonders how players are not carried off in the masses. The fact that they are not is a testament to the players' skill with a hurl and the respect they have for each other as athletes." says Colm Geraghty, hurling enthusiast and team member.

"I've been interest in Gaelic sports for a long time but as an American I didn't have much of an opportunity to play." says team member Devin GawneMark. After just starting in with Gaelic football, Devin learned a hurling team was forming, made the switch and hasn't looked back. "Hurling is so much cooler than football. So that was that."

The club has focused on building local membership and integrating the Irish and American players into a single team, rather than dividing into junior and senior teams that split along lines of experience---and nationality. "For us, the Irish guys can share their skills and experience while the new guys bring an enthusiasm for the game that make us a pretty formidable force on the field." says GawneMark..

The Irish Fair of Minnesota has been a friendly venue for the club to promote itself. "We are constantly looking for new members" says GawneMark. "The single biggest recruitment jump we've had after our first week out was immediately after Irish Fair, and our exhibition there last summer was the highlight of our inaugural season. It's

safe to say we're all looking forward to playing there again, and hopefully this year we'll be trouncing an out-of-town team instead of just the usual scrimmage. And the Irish business community has been tremendously supportive of our new club, and we are thankful for everything that they have done for us."

The Club will also get financial support from the Irish Fair of Minnesota Irish Cultural Grant project to help get out the word to potential sponsors and players, to train referees and to buy equipment as hurling is an expensive sport to play, and the equipment not readily available in the US. For more information about the club you can visit their website at www.twincitieshurling.com."



Robert Emmets Hurling Club Team Members

Origins of Hurling Aswirl with Myth & History

Hurling was first mentioned in a description of the Battle of Moytura said to have occurred in the 14th century BC in Ireland where the magical Tuatha Dé Danann played the Fir Bolg in a match. The dead from the game were buried before the "real" clash started.

Many Irish legend enthusiasts know that the name of greatest Irish hero 'Cuchulainn' means 'Hound of Culainn' and that he got this nickname upon offering to replace the services of Culainn's watchdog, which he'd killed. But did you realize it was with a hurling ball, a '*sliotar*,' that the deed was done??

The famous Brehon laws that governed early Irish life covered divorce, commerce, social order, justice ...and hurling! Early fouls included:

- 1. The Sandwich foul where two or more people jostle and shoulder one person between them;**
- 2. The two way pull or cross swiping;**
- 3. Throwing the hurley and**
- 4. Lying on the ball.**

These rules still apply in the modern game.

Ireland's English rulers passed the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366 in an effort to prevent the Anglo-Normans living in Ireland from becoming 'more Irish than the Irish' and siding with the natives when conflicts arose between them and the Crown. Thus, the Statutes outlawed Anglo-Norman/Irish marriages, forbade Anglo-Normans use of the Irish language, customs and laws and---banned hurling, that apparently pernicious, seductive, dynamic, thoroughly Celtic sport that builds camaraderie between players of all backgrounds.

EVENTS

THE IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA AUGUST 11 - 13, 2006

Harriet Island in St. Paul
FREE ADMISSION

Time to get the correct swatches on the calendar blocked out and the first reminders sent to those from afar we like to have with us with us for our wonderful annual event. Join us for a three-day celebration of Irish heritage with food, fun and music on the banks of the Mississippi River. Since 2001, the Irish Fair has been held at beautiful Harriet Island Regional Park in downtown St. Paul. The festival is recognized as one of the most family-friendly events in the Twin Cities and one of the most authentic Irish festivals nationwide.

2ND ANNUAL IRISH FAIR SUMMER SCHOOL August 10th, 2006

University of St. Thomas

This is an opportunity for us to get a more focused, in depth understanding of Irish culture. Last year's Summer School was thoughtful, lively, varied and personally my favorite element of the weekend. This year's will build on the first-rate inaugural effort. **Sneak Preview: Dr Anthony Roche** Senior Lecturer, University College Dublin School of English & Drama will be speaking on Synge at the Summer school to complement the Synge Cycle (below).

GUTHRIE WORLDSTAGE SERIES PRESENTS DRUIDSYNGE June 27 - July 1, 2006

The plays of John Millington Synge --directed by Garry Hynes

The Guthrie Theater will present a unique celebration of the life and work of John Millington Synge. Acclaimed as one of the most ambitious undertakings in Irish theater for many years, this collective presentation of all of Synge's work fulfills a long-term artistic commitment by Tony Award-winning director Gary Hynes to re-evaluate and re-engage with one of Ireland's dramatic giants. The experience can be enjoyed over one, two or more days and plays include: *The Shadow of the Glen*, *The Playboy of the Western World*, *The Tinker's Wedding*, *The Well of the Saints*, *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

THE 1ST ANNUAL "RUN WITH THE CELTS" will take place Saturday morning (Irish Fair Weekend) and



include a 5K event plus a 1K family / kid run as well - all at the Harriet Island site. This promises to add an extra fun event to an already very cool weekend and a great chance for the whole family to get active together. Contact Steve Hyland mshyland@aol.com if you would like to volunteer to help make this a reality or are interested in more information.

(It'll be more like the family-safe event on the left (from County Meath, Ireland), *yes*-- but I couldn't resist this appealing photo of these 'wild Celts' (right) having fun running in a re-enactment of the history of Britain.



THE CHILDREN OF LIR: A MUSICAL SHOWCASE OF MINNESOTA'S IRISH CULTURE

Plans are being laid for this year's Minnesota Fringe Festival to take on a new flavor with Twin Cities Irish traditional artists presenting 'The Children of Lir'. The Children of Lir is a tale of love, jealousy, loyalty, and redemption among the Tuatha De Danaan, the gods of ancient Ireland. The show is collaboration between Brenda Buckley, director of Scoil Na D'Tri Dance Academy and Fern Lerwick local piper, singer, writer, and director.

Irish traditional artists including local step dancers, set dancers, musicians, and singers interested in contributing their talents to this project are urged to contact: Fern Lerwick, 763-566-7019 fernetta@comcast.net



CELTIC SOUL-ECOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY & SACRED JOURNEYS

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2006

-Featuring renowned Celtic scholars J. Philip Newell, Mary Low, David Keller, and Ed Sellner

Come on a pilgrimage...a journey into the heart of the **Celtic Soul** as we explore early Celtic Christian understandings of care for the earth, the life of the spirit and the significance of sacred journeys. These concepts are rooted in the pre-Christian indigenous Celtic people of

Europe and have great wisdom for us as we face the challenges of the 21st century.

<http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org/content.asp?id=508> for more information

FAMILY HISTORY WRITERS' RETREAT IN IRELAND 7-14 OCTOBER 2006

Genealogists Sharon DeBartolo Carmack and James W. Warren are leading a week-long tour/workshop focused on learning about the lives of your ancestors in Ireland and using the material to write a family history. The dates of the trip are from 7-14 October 2006. Home base will be Fitzgerald's Woodlands House with daytrips to historic sites. Even if you have no prior genealogical research or writing experience, in this workshop you'll learn the basics of writing a family history: how to record family stories, and how to blend family information with relevant social history. For more information on the Family History Writers' Retreat, go to www.EnchantingIreland.com or www.YourIrishGenealogy.com, or contact Jim Warren at 719-660-8445 or e-mail: jim.warren@juno.com.

HOST FAMILIES SOUGHT FOR NORTHERN IRISH KIDS SUMMER 2006



Each year 75-100 children from Catholic and Protestant homes in troubled areas of Northern Ireland have been hosted by families in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin through the auspices of **Children's Program of Northern Ireland (CPNI)**. Protestant and Catholic children are brought together to work on conflict resolution and reconciliation skills here in an atmosphere of trust and security. **Interested in hosting an 11-year old Catholic or Protestant girl or boy for 4 weeks this summer? Call (651) 405-1108 or go to www.epni.org for more information.**

AN GHAELGE

Courtesy of Gaeltacht Minnesota <http://www.gaelminn.org/index.htm>

This month's Irish proverb honors the hard-playing members of the Robert Emmett Hurling Club

Is maith an t-iománaí an fear ar an gcláí.
It's a good hurler he is, the man on the wall.

... at least in his own mind. This is the Monday morning quarterback, or the back seat driver -- the person who is not actually *doing* whatever it is, but who has all the expert advice, and is more than willing to tell you how you SHOULD have played it or done it.

*Until Next Time,
Best Regards from the*

Irish Fair of
Minnesota