


LOUGH GUR





*Folklore
Activity Sheet*







Gearoid Earla was the 3rd Earl of Desmond who lived in the 14th Century, over 600 years ago.



There are many tales told about him, perhaps the most famous of these being the "Tale of the Lost Castle of Lough Gur".





It is believed that the Earl was a sorcerer who practiced magic. One of his favourite ways to spend his time was turning himself into animals: birds, serpents, wolves and many other creatures you couldn't even imagine.



One particular day, he turned himself into a magnificent raven with beautiful black feathers. However when he tried to return to his human form, he found that he could not. It seemed as though he would remain a raven for the rest of his days until his mother, the enchantress Queen Aine, agreed to change him back. As punishment for such foolishness, she banished him and his castle to the bottom of the lake where they remain to this day.



However once every seven years Gearoid is able to rise from the lake to ride his white horse upon the water until dawn. With the rising sun, Gearoid is banished back to his castle under the lake. It is said his horse is shod with silver shoes and when the shoes wear away Gearoid will be freed.





Many people believe that if you look deeply into the lake on Christmas Eve you may see the lights of Gearoid's castle and hear the sound of chiming bells and laughter.

Fer Fi

King of the fairies







Fer Fi (pronounced fair fee) is another prominent figure in Lough Gur's folklore. The local people believed him to be the King of the Fairies and to live in the hollow hill of Knockfennel.

He was tall and slender with elegant, otherworldly features and long, flowing hair. He was never seen without his golden harp, on which he played the most beautiful melodies. He played three types of music and each type would effect the hearer's fortune differently.

The first type "Geantraighe" was happy music, the second "Goltraighe" was music of great sadness, the third and final type, "Suantraighe" was said to be the sweetest of all but was the music of sleep or death.

If a person was ill, the tradition was to take them to the hill of Knockfennell on the night of a full moon and hope to hear the happy music of Fer Fi. If they did so, that was a time of joy as it meant the sick person was cured. If they heard the sad music it meant they were not cured and should be taken to a doctor for treatment. If they heard the sleep music it meant death was soon approaching as no mortal man or woman can help but fall into a trance at it's beauty but it is a sleep from which they will never wake.



Fer Fi is also believed to be a guardian of Lough Gur and those around it, especially when the lake freezes as his magic prevents the ice from cracking, keeping those who walk upon it safe.



Queen Aine was Queen of the fairies and a powerful enchantress.

She was kind and fair and said to be one of the most beautiful women to walk the land. However, if someone ever wronged her they would find themselves cursed with terrible misfortune.

One of the most well known stories centred around her was "The Tale of the Golden Comb".

Many year's ago, it was a common sight to see Queen Aine, seated by the lake's edge at the bottom of the hill of Knockadoon, combing her hair with a beautiful golden comb made by the fairies, with noting like it ever being seen in Ireland before or since. On one such occasion Aine fell asleep curled up in a patch of long grass and wild flowers, her comb laid beside her. A young Shepard boy happened upon the sleeping Aine and foolishly decided to steal the golden comb.

When Aine woke, she was furious and in her rage, she placed a terrible curse upon the thief, and disappeared beneath the waters

of the lake. The Shepard boy suffered greatly due to this curse, losing his sweetheart, his animals, and his health, becoming very ill indeed. As he lay dying he confessed to his crime of stealing from Queen Aine and begged his parents to return it to the lake. His parents rushed to the lake shore and threw the golden comb into the water. Within seconds Queen Aine, surrounded by waves of golden light, rose from the lake with the comb held tightly in her hand. She smiled at the boy's parents and thanked them for the return of her comb.

Shocked to be spoken to by the fairy Queen, they stammered out profuse apologies to Queen Aine on behalf of their son who was laid on his deathbed. She inclined her head and disappeared once more. When they returned home, they found the curse was lifted and the boy began to slowly recover. The boy was never so foolish to steal again and Queen Aine could once again be seen combing her hair by the waters edge.