

## The Harp



The music, symbol and presence of the harp (“cláirseach”) in Ireland dates back over a thousand years. It can be seen on manuscripts and Christian stone crosses which date back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Its significance has evolved to encompass the spirit of the Irish culture to the present day.

Originally, its distinguishing features were its use of wire, typically brass strings, and its resonating chamber carved from a single log, customarily willow. The highly tensioned strings are played with fingernails, creating a remarkably clear sound. Today, many harps use gut or synthetic string and the construction of the chamber has changed considerably. Instead of being hollowed out from a singular piece of wood, the sound box is generally assembled from sawn pieces of wood glued together which produces a different sound.

Brian Boru, the last High King of Ireland, who died in 1014 AD in the Battle of Clontarf was believed to have been an accomplished harpist himself. Many kings and chieftains at that time had their own harpists who were accompanied by poetry recitations and the singing of psalms. These musicians were held in high regard and enjoyed special privileges.

It was Henry VIII who selected the harp to be used as the symbol on Irish coins when he declared himself King of Ireland in 1531. However, during this medieval period, Irish traditions were losing ground to the imposing British influence. The harp then became a symbol of the resistance to the Crown of England. As a result, the harp was banned and burnt. Harpists were condemned and executed and the Irish musical tradition began to fade away.

Despite the British influence reigning supreme, a small group of surviving Irish traditional harpists met in 1792 at the Belfast Harp Festival hosted by musician and folk music collector, Edward Bunting. Bunting wrote down the music they played and recorded the terminology of the harpists. This was the first written recording of traditional Gaelic harp music. This document survived and currently provides traditional songs which would otherwise have disappeared forever.

The Gaelic Revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century sought to resurrect the shared heritage of the Irish people through the celebration of mythology, literature, language and music. The vibrations of harp strings were the heartbeat of this cultural resuscitation.

Less than a dozen Irish harps survive from the medieval (pre-1700) period. The oldest one, on which the official emblem of Ireland is based, is the Trinity College Harp. It is also known as the Brian Boru or O’Neill Harp and this 15<sup>th</sup> century harp is on display in the Long Room of Trinity College, Dublin.

Sources:  
[www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com](http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com)  
[www.studyinireland.ie](http://www.studyinireland.ie)  
[www.irelandtravelguides.com](http://www.irelandtravelguides.com)

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# North Mayo Heritage Centre NEWSLETTER

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National Heritage Week  
 A Heritage Council programme



Join us for  
**HERITAGE WEEK**  
**13<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August 2022**

Cover image: Eamon Murphy during a blacksmithing demonstration

Some rare and wonderful vehicles which you may spot during Heritage Week at the North Mayo Heritage Centre



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An Roinn Tithíochta,  
 Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht  
 Department of Housing,  
 Local Government and Heritage



The North Mayo  
 Heritage Centre

The North Mayo Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the region



Sat. 13 <sup>th</sup> - 21 <sup>st</sup>	10 am – 4 pm	The Green in the Gold Exhibition	Reception
Sat. 13 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm – 3 pm	Launch Event	Café
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm – 4 pm	Blacksmithing	Courtyard
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm – 4 pm	Sheep wool spinning	Reception
Mon. 15 <sup>th</sup>		Genealogy Video 1	Online
Mon. 15 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup>	10 am – 4 pm	J.J. Leonard Exhibition	Conference Centre
Tue. 16 <sup>th</sup>		Genealogy Video 2	Online
Wed. 17 <sup>th</sup>		Genealogy Video 3	Online
Wed. 17 <sup>th</sup>	8 pm – 10 pm	J.J. Leonard Lecture	Conference Centre
Thur. 18 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm – 4 pm	Organic Gardening	Organic Garden
Thur. 18 <sup>th</sup>		Genealogy Video 4	Online
Fri. 19 <sup>th</sup>		Genealogy Video 5	Online
Sat. 20 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm, 2 pm, 4 pm	Tours of Enniscoe House	Reception / Enniscoe House
Sun. 21 <sup>st</sup>	2 pm – 4 pm	Vintage Vehicles and Trains Ox Mountain Railway	Carpark Carpark

**FREE  
events but places must  
be booked in advance.  
Tel: 096 31809  
to book**



National Heritage Week 2022 is an initiative by the Heritage Council celebrating all things heritage. It brings together communities, families, organisations, cultural institutions, academics and enthusiasts, to build awareness about the value of heritage and support its conservation.

Our schedule of events for this year has something for all the family.

#### The Green in the Gold exhibition

In 1841, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Government of the country sat in London and presided over the British Empire, then the richest empire on the planet. Meanwhile, Ireland had a population of just over 8 million people. It was the granary of Britain exporting enormous quantities of oats and barley, butter, livestock, fish and eggs and even potatoes from Ireland, the factory workers of England depended on it. All would change in 1845 when the first blight struck.

This exhibition researched, curated and designed by the North Mayo Heritage Centre looks at the effects the famine had on the people of North Mayo and how some found their way to Australia.

#### J.J. Leonard exhibition

Jack Leonard born in Crossmolina in 1882 and emigrated to England in 1900. He trained in London with the Illustrated London News in journalism, illustration and photography; skills he would put to very good use in the Land War, the War of Independence and the Civil War.

He returned to Ireland in 1906 and set up his photographic business. This took him around the county, his customers ranged from ordinary families who put on their best attire to have 'their likeness recorded' as well as folk in the 'big house'.

His grandson Anthony is the custodian of his collection and the researcher of this exhibition which is open to the public from Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> August to Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> of August. Anthony will also give a lecture on his grandfather's work and his influences on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> @ 8pm, all welcome.

#### Sheep wool spinning demonstration

Join Annie Gambrell to explore the world of natural spinning using beautiful Irish wool for all ages to enjoy with different wheels and associated equipment on display.

This workshop will take place on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August from 2pm to 4pm and is suitable for all the family.

#### Blacksmithing demonstration

Join Eamon Murphy for plenty of noise and smoke as he demonstrates the art of the traditional blacksmith.

This workshop will take place on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August from 2pm to 4pm and is suitable for all the family.

#### Organic Gardening

The Enniscoe Organic Garden is one of the oldest certified organic gardens on the island of Ireland. This workshop will take place on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August from 2pm to 4pm and will be geared towards young people. It will show them how to grow sustainable organic crops at home and how to enjoy them. Places are limited so booking in advance is advised, please call 096 31809 to reserve a place.

**To book:** The North Mayo Heritage Centre and Enniscoe House are delighted to once again be involved and to provide this FREE schedule of events, tours, lectures, exhibitions, workshops and online videos. Please note the times of each event. Places are limited at some of the events and will require advanced booking. Please call 096 31809. Please follow us on social media for further updates and news of additional events and times.

#### Genealogy Videos 1 - 5

Keep an eye on our Youtube Channel during Heritage Week! We will be posting a series of five short videos:

- *August 15<sup>th</sup>: Coming to America: European Exodus*  
Hear how the Irish Famine made a dramatic impact on the history of immigration into North America.
- *August 16<sup>th</sup>: Coming to America: The Journey*  
What was the journey like for an Irish immigrant escaping the famine of 1845-49?
- *August 17<sup>th</sup>: Coming to America: The Influx*  
How were immigrants into the United States documented and recorded in the 1840s and '50s?
- *August 18<sup>th</sup>: Coming to America: Your Grandparents' Time*  
Part I: Between 1900 and 1930, over 750,000 Irish people left for America. What did their journey involve?
- *August 19<sup>th</sup>: Coming to America: Your Grandparents' Time*  
Part II: Arriving in New York or Boston in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, each immigrant was questioned, recorded, and sent on their way. For many, their journeys were only at the halfway stage.

#### Tours of Enniscoe House

Hidden among the woods at the foot of Mount Nephin is Enniscoe House, "the last Great House of North Mayo". The Enniscoe Estate has been in the family since the 1650s and the house dates from the 1790s. With its wonderful over-sized entrance doorway drawing you in to a home of elegant reception rooms and fine bedrooms, each with its own unique story.

Tours will take place on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> August from 12.00 noon and must be booked in advance.

#### Static display of vintage vehicles

The Mayo North Old Engine and Tractor Club was founded in 1999 with the intention of providing a meeting place for folk interested in old machinery of all types, and the preservation of bygone skills.

#### Bog Train

One of the earliest trains to arrive at the Bord na Mona Oweninny location in 1951 was the Ruston Hornsby locomotive, locally known the Bog Train or Loco. This one in particular was built in 1947 and served Bord Na Mona throughout until work ceased in 2004.

This locomotive along with two carriages has been fully restored by the members of the Mayo North Old Engine and Tractor club.

You can join them on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> August from 2pm – 4pm for a brief spin across the fields of the Enniscoe Estate.