Treasure hunt through prehistoric Ireland

CONTINUING our summer series of Out and About in Limerick, NORMA PRENDIVILLE visits Lough Gur

A SENSE of adventure is your best companion when you go to visit Lough Gur, recognised as one of the most important archaeological centres in the country.

Granted, there is ease in plenty to be savoured in a quick visit. And it's actually worth the trip alone, simply to sit on the rocks and look, at the lake where Gearoid Iarla, the fourth Earl of Desmond, is reputed to lie buried and from where, it is said, he rises every seven years to ride across the water on his horse. If peace and serenity, away from the hurlyburly of urban life, are what you crave, you won't go away disappointed.

But if you really want to get the best from it, 'heed the scouts' warning and be prepared. Lough Gur is not your usual, safe, five-minutes in and out, "I've now done Stone Age Ireland" job. To really appreciate it, you need a bit of time and you need a certain scouting spirit. With dozens of historic sites spread out over a wide area, the whole thing resembles nothing so much as a giant, neolithic treasure hunt.

At the Visitors' Centre proper, you get your map and if you pop into the museum you get your clues. There, in brief, you will be introduced to the 5,000 years of history that lie all around you. And there are replicas there of artefacts and treasures from practically every age of human existence in the area. But after that, you are very much on your own.

Of course, all along the way, there are diagrams and drawings to explain and illustrate the sites, bringing a seemingly senseless heap of stones to life, making you imagine how it was way back then. But how adventurous you want to be after that is your own

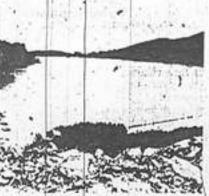
Some of the sites are more accessible than others. It's easy to get to the "Spectacles" for example, a little patch of tiny kitchen gardens, with the remains of thousand years ago. And standing there, on the terrace above the lake, it's not difficult to see with the eyes of the men, women and children who lived and laboured there. who gared families and



Aisling Enright, left, Old Pallas, and Kathleen Hayes, Pallasgreen, at Lough Gur.

grew food and feared the invaders Likewise, it is easy to sit back and wonder at the mindframe of those who once inhabited Bolin Island, a genuine crannog site dating from sometime between 500 and 1000 AD. Tall trees grow on it now, where once fragile stick fences and a tiny strip of water were the only protection against the many dangers that lurked outside. But if you lie back and close one eye, looking across the lack at knockadoon, you will see much the same scene as our ancestors, houses and hearthstones from a when the land was dense with woods, a source of danger and a source of food and fuel.

> But many other sites are off the beaten track and you won't get there in a pair of high-heeled shoes. You will need instead, a



Lough Gur . . : full of history.

determination to get to the top of the hill and a keen eye to pick out the many stone circles, ring forts and neolithic house sites that



One of the many tresures at Lough Gur.

Two of the more dramatic sites are leasily accessible from the main road, however. One is the Giants Grave, or wedge-tomb, a ritual site of burial, going back 4,500 years. When the site was excavated in 1938 the remains of eight adults and four children were found there, along with examples of "beaker" ware - the dishes and urns of the time.

According to the note attached, a Samuel Hall discovered in the last century that an old woman had lived there for years and at her death, money diggers ransacked the grave. It still stands as a reminder of a different culture.

But perhaps the best and most impressive of all of Lough Gur's treasures is the Great Stone Circle. You will find this on your map, on the main road from Limerick to Bruff. It is rightly regarded as one of the finest stone circles in Ireland measuring nearly 47 metres in diameter. Surrounded by an earth bank and encircled by trees, there, is a magic atmosphere here, redolent of the times when it was a place for sacred ritual. These rituals may have taken-place at dawn on Midsummer's morning. according to the guide notes, for as the sun rises, the first rays of light shine directly through the narrow entrance passageway and into the centre of the circle. The stones that form the circle are massive, the largest nearly eight foot high and weighing nearly 50

Lough Gur has many other secrets to be found by a discerning and curious visito. But it yields these secrets gently and instils a sense of reverence for what once was. At a time when the whole notion of interpretive centres is contentious. Lordy Gur represents a very careful and sensitive scheme. It will draw you back, again and again, but do try, if you can; to get there at least once.

saw us crowned West champi-Our full back Dan Hennessy had an outstanding game and his lengthy clearances inspired

crucial scores that eventually

the rest of our backline. Trailing by two points as half-time approached, we got a great boost when corner-forward Earnon Power gained pos-session after a great ball from centre-field player Seamie Collum and crashed home a goal.

With eight minutes left in the game we trailed by one point but were attacking strongly, when full forward Hugh O'Don-

nell was impeded in the square. From the resultant penalty Ciaran Dillane gave the goalkeeper no chance. This was a real pressure kick but Ciaran was more than equal to it.

Shortly afterwards Hugh O'Donnell put us three points

clear with a long range point.

Drom. Broadford attacked strongly in the closing minutes and were rewarded with a point to cut our lead to two points. Despite applying some

intense pressure, however, there was no way through our superb backline and when referee Mike Walsh' blew the final whistle, there were great scepes of joy. All 16 players on duty were heroes as they showed marvel-

lous character and skill in overcoming a very good and highly rated Drom.-Broadford. We have now completed the league and championship dou-

ble and now turn our attentions towards winning that clusive Team: Michael Downes, Pat

Sheehy, Dan Hennessey, Phelim Mullane, John Power, Ciaran Moloney, Eamon O'Connor, Seanie Collum, Liam Collum, Daragh Moloney, John Hartnett, Ciaran Dillane, Eamon Power, Hugh O'Donnell (capt.) and Richard Hickey.

Subs were Ronan Airey, Martin Downes, Fom Foley, Sean Condon, Sean O'Donnell,

Pat Corkery. Rathkeale junior hurling tournament final: Knockaderry 2-8, Rathkeale 1-10. First round: Knockaderry 0-

9, Croagh-Kilfinny 0-8. During the past week our junior hurling team won out the annual Rathkeale junior hurling tournament.

A very understrength team played some great hurling in defeating a young but promis-ing Croagh-Kilfinny.

Free taker Richard Condon became the hero of the hour when he converted a 21 yards free from out on the sideline

The final against host club Rathkeale was played on last Sunday evening and we won by the parrowest of margins after an exciting game.

We were very slow to get going and at one stage in the first half, we trailed by seven

We slowly hauled ourselves back, but with our forwards scorning some great chances we still trailed by two points with less than five minutes left. Claran Moloney, who had an outstanding game came to the rescue, however, when he crashed an unstoppable shot to the net after good approach work by Paul McMahon.

one point to the good.

Centre-back Mike O'Connor. was a reserving winner of the man of the match award on Sunday evening, while John Hennessey was named man of the match in our semi-final win.

Incidentally, both players lined out in the centre-back

position. Team Michael Downes, Brian O'Shea, Paddy Copse, Johnny Corkery. Kennedy, Mike O'Connor, John Hennessey, Gerard Copse, Brendan McGrath, Ciaran Moloney, Kenneth Moran, Richard Condon, Martin Kennedy, Paul McMahon and Mike Hennessey.

Subs were John Hartnett, Christopher Moloney, John Condon, Patty Dore, Robert Hartigan, Donal Copse. Fixtures: There are some

vital fixtures listed for us for the weekend On this Friday evening in Croom at 7.30 p.m. we will play the County semi-final against

the city, winners. On next Saturday morning in Adare at 11.30 a.m. our under 12 hurlers will play old rivals

Next Sunday afternoon in Newcastlewest our Junior. A hurlers will play Knockfierna Gaels in the first round of the championship at 3.30 p.m.

CHILTEELY-DROMKEEN: Kilteely-Dromkeen 2-10, Oola 3-4. We captured the East minor football championship after a lapse of 10 years when we defeated Oola, Played in difficult weather conditions at

full-back, as did Paddy Har when moved to midfield. I cis Stokes, John Hartnett David O'Neill were our forwards. Overall, it was a solid team performance and semi-final with confidence.

Team — J. Prendergas English, M. Stokes, L. Pu V. O'Neill, J. Hennessy O'Sullivan, M. Lyons, J. Pe D. O'Neill 0-2, J. Harthett Hartnett 0-2, F. Stokes T. Heffernan, E. Quintan Sub., Mark Murphy.

Kilteely-Dromkeen Hedamore 1-5. Our n urlers won the East title fo first time when they defe edamore.

We started well thank some well taken scores by Bartnett, particularly his from a 20 metre free. The time score was 1-6 to 1-1 i favour. Fedamore started the se

half well scoring three p without reply. However, Hartnett replied with p from play and 65s. His br Pat, scored the goal which us an excellent victory. Hartnett, who finished with was our best player, assisted by John Prendergo goal; Willie McGrath, yons, in defence; Pat Ha played well at midfield Mick Stokes, Dave O'Nei Eamon Quinlan played w the attack:

The minor footballers hurlers have now qualifie the county semi-finals v they will play the winners South division. Team Prendergast, L Purcel English, T. Hefferman O'Neill, M. Lyons, McGrath, P. Hartnett 1-Stokes, Ml. Stokes, J. Ha 1-8, J. Penny, M. Murph Quinlan 0-1, D. O'Neill 0-

AHANE: Our minor hi team retained the East chi onship with a convincing over Cappamore, Final s Ahane 0-14, Cappamore Team — O. Moran, N. S T. Byrnes, C. Brown, P. P. E. Hurley, T. Rainsfor Moran, I. Bradley, T. Fit ald, C. Smith, T. Blak O'Connor, J. Quinn, A. Co Subs., R. Tuohy and D.

Our minor team play county semi-final of the pionship on Friday, August Our junior hurling team

Cappamore in the first rou the East hurling champion We had good displays from Callinan, Tom Meskell Barry Smith, Final score, A 3-10, Cappamore 0-9. Tea M. Flannery, L. O'Conno Enright, M. O'Brien, J. P P. Callinan, E. Hurley McDonnell, A. Snlith, B. S T. Meskell, G. Murphy Quinn, N. Byrnes, R. Q Subs., S. Hassett, C. Smith All roads lead to the C

Ahane and Ballybrown pla a place in the county semi-Throw-in 2 p.m. Fixture — county u-16 ball semi-final, Ahane v. B on Sunday, August 16, at

Grounds on Sunday next

p.m. in Caherconlish. ADARE: The m hurlers showed no mere Gaels in Askearon when powered their way to a title, 6-12 to 1-5. The expe stiff challenge failed to m ialise and long befroe finish Adare had left opponents trailing in

wake. Knockfierna Gaels ope the scoring after just a mi with a pointed 65 but from moment man of the ma a classy point three min later, it was all downhill Knockfierna after that, speculative lob from T Houlihan after 15 min ended up in the net and w Paul Kearney at full forward orner forward Do Butler added further go there was just no way back Knockfierna. To their credit, thou

they battled on bravely in second half. This will Adare great confidence doubt but I am sure selectors would have pre red a stiffer test. The team scorers were: Cyril Guir Oliver Brennan, Kieran D don, Noel Dillon, Noel K ney, Mark Foley (0-2), J. Foley, Anthony O'Gorr (0-1), Paul O'Keeffe (0 Vincent Foley (0-4), Mar Doran, Tony Houlihan (2 Edward Scalley (0-1), 12 Edward Scanlon (0-1), P raig Kearney (1-0), Da Butler (2-0), Subs.: P O'Shaughnessy John Dugg

The senior hurlers face daunting task on Sunday no at the Gaelic Grounds (3. p.m) when they take