



Cumann Gaelach na Ginéimhe
Geneva Irish Association
Association Irlandaise de Genève

Newsletter: Spring 2008



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Annual General Meeting

It's that time of the year again, when you can come out in force in support of your Association. The AGM is an opportunity for members to come together to look back fondly over the activities and events of the past year, voice your opinions and put forward ideas for the year to come, review the Association's accounts, and say a big thank you to the outgoing committee while electing and welcoming in the new. It's also the chance to catch up with friends over a glass or two and generally have an enjoyable evening.

Our AGM is scheduled for **Wednesday 28th May** at the La Romana restaurant, (37 rue du Vermont), starting at 20h00, with an apéro offered from 19h30. Some of our committee members are standing down this year, so we would welcome your nominations to the committee. If you know of someone, perhaps recently arrived, that might be well suited to joining the committee, then why not suggest it to them? And if you yourself have never stepped forward perhaps you have a little extra time on your hands this year and would be prepared to get a little more involved in the Association.

It is very important that members who have paid their 2008 membership fee, *which was due on January 1st*, participate at the meeting as a quorum is required in order for the AGM to take place.

Candidates for election to any office of the Association may be nominated by any two paid-up members of the Association provided that the nomination in writing reaches the Secretary at least fourteen days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

Notices of motion may be sent in by any two paid-up members to reach the Secretary not less than fourteen days before the date fixed for the Annual General Meeting.

Attached to this newsletter (Members version only) are: Minutes of last year's AGM; Nomination forms and a letter of proxy (for those eligible to vote but who will be absent). Completed forms should be sent by email to geneva.irish@ireland.com or by mail to the GIA, 7 chemin du Molard, CH-1266 Duillier.

Upcoming Events

- **Book Club**
14 May
Da Vinci's Lounge, Geneva
- **Caves Ouvertes 2008**
24 May 2008
Satigny, Russin, Dardagny
- **RVIA Annual Feis**
9-12 May
Mollkirch

Geneva Irish Dance Club, Genthod

For those interested in traditional Irish dancing, why not come and join us twice a month in the nearby village of Genthod. We meet every second Tuesday in the « Salle communale de Genthod » from 19h45 until about 21h15 (sometimes later). We do ceili and set dancing and also a little line dancing (with an Irish flavour!). At the moment we are preparing a small show as we have been asked to perform for the "Fête de la Musique" on 21 June in Genthod (between 13h and 14h).



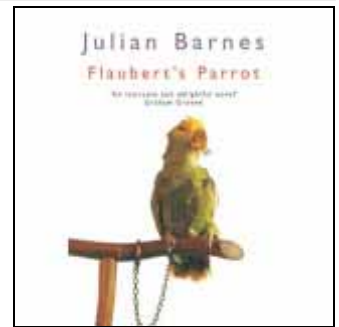
Anybody interested can contact Angela (men needn't be shy as we do have a few): phone 022-361.86.42, e-mail : ae.jeangros@bluewin.ch

Book Club

The next Book club meeting will be on Wednesday 14 May, at 7 p.m., in Da Vinci's Lounge Bar (rue de Grenus) for which we're reading **Flaubert's Parrot by Julian Barnes**. We have selected *The Russian Concubine* by Kate Furnivall for the June meeting on Wednesday 11th; same time, same venue.

See you there!

For more information call Ruth Creamer on 0033 608 43 65 45



Caves Ouvertes 2008

No month of May is complete without a visit to the Caves on their "Open Day", which this year is Saturday 24th May. It's a wonderful day, when Geneva's vintners open their caves to the public. The day itself is the official launch date of the "nouveau millésime" and is a must for all wine lovers in the region who each year take great pleasure in visiting the caves, chatting with the producers, tasting and, of course, buying their favourite tipples. Many of the caves open not only for tasting but also provide music, dance and food which compliment the high spirits of those who attend.

As in past years, we are organising a bus to take the interested wine lovers to a select number of caves in the area such as: in **Satigny** - the Domaine du Paradis for their Pont des Soupirs Rouge (blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Gamaret) and Sauvignon Blanc; in **Russin** - the Domaine des Molards which last year boasted a very popular Merlot, Rosé and Merlot Blanc; and in **Dardagny** - the Clos de Pins for their Muscat, and the Domaine de Centaure for their Nom de Zeus Merlot.

The bus collection point will be Charly o'Neill's Irish pub at 11h30 *sharp* and will return to the same point at 17h30. We'll be back in good time to see the start of the Heineken Cup Final, when hopefully the boys in red will do Ireland proud once more. The match kicks off at 18h00.

Places are limited so book your seat early in order to avoid disappointment. Price is CHF 20 for paid-up members and CHF 30 for non.members. **Seats must be reserved and paid for in advance.** Once you have contacted us and booked your seat you can make payment by either paying directly into our post office account (over the counter or via ebanking). The account name is "The Geneva Irish Association, 1200 Geneve" and the account no. is "12-10220-4". For further information and to book your seat call 078 603 6863, or email geneva.irish@ireland.com



Rhine Valley Irish Association

Our friends in the Rhine Valley Irish Association are organising their annual feis with music and dance workshops as well as concerts. If you have no plans for the weekend of May 9th, why not make your way up to Mollkirch in Alsace. More information on www.rvia-online.net

Get your GIA Newsletter by Email!

The most efficient and environmentally friendly way for us to distribute this newsletter is by email. It's also cheaper, which means your membership fees can be used to fund more and better events. If you're not already receiving the newsletter by email and you do use email for other purposes, we'd appreciate it if you'd allow us to send this newsletter to by email. Simply send a message to geneva.irish@ireland.com and we'll add you to the list. Thank you!

St. Patrick's Dinner

The St. Patrick's dinner was held in the delightful rustic setting of the Chateau de Collex on the outskirts of Geneva on Saturday 15th March. The committee worked feverishly on the afternoon to adorn the function room and bar with all manner of Irish banners and bunting. Arriving guests were greeted in the downstairs bar with soft lighting, and easy listening to traditional music provided by the Waterford based band Boxy brought over for St. Patrick's weekend. We were pleased to welcome 70+ guests on the evening including H.E. Ambassador Sharkey from Bern and H.E. Ambassador O'Ceallaigh from the Permanent Irish Mission here in Geneva accompanied by his charming wife Antoinette. Many familiar faces were present but also many new ones whom we were pleased to welcome helping to boost our membership drive. The salmon provided by Sarah Browne was absolutely sumptuous as was the succulent roast lamb even if the mint sauce had its own distinct French recipe to it. The chocolate dessert was a calorie overload of mega proportions but it was well worth it. A very fine selection of local wines in copious supply flowed as freely as the conversation around the tables.

Ambassador Sharkey's after-dinner address, filled with great humour, entertained us all and was the perfect complement to the meal. The customary raffle was very well supported and we express our appreciation to all the patrons for the wonderful prizes and generosity: - DBM, Declan McAdams of Hyposwiss Private Bank, Genève SA, Donal O'Neill of Irish Connections, John North of Seven Arts, Frank Hennessy of Heaven restaurant, 19th Avenue hairdressers.

After dinner we moved back down to the bar and the party literally got into full swing – the girls (mostly) out on the dance floor led by Rhona and Sarah and the lads (mostly) holding up the bar - just in case it might fall down. Fair play to Boxy – we would not let them stop as they took us on a musical tour around the 32 counties. It was well into the small hours when we wound up. An-oíche a bhí ann ar fad!

We take this opportunity to express our warm thanks to all who attended the evening and their support for the event. Likewise we appreciate the messages we received after the event. The selection of the venue was out of town and a new departure. We hope to add a selection of photos to our gallery in the near future.

Making History by Brian Friel

The Geneva Literary Aid Society (GLAS) brought the historical drama, *Making History*, by Brian Friel, to Geneva as part of theatre company Ouroboros's Flight of the Earls tour. The play describes how the Flight might have been, displaying the strong and weak aspects of the main characters, Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell as they faced the difficulties that met them on this ill-fated journey. The theatre at the Aula College des Coudriers was packed and the audience thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful depiction of one of the most poignant moments in Irish history.

Proceeds of this event were donated to the Furaha Orphans Centre in Kilifi, Kenya

See: www.theglas.org



An-tóir ar an gceardlann rince seit – Big turn out for the set dancing workshop

Upwards of 30 enthusiasts attended the set dancing workshop in the Cité Universitaire in March. Instructors Corinne and Andrea made the trip down from Olten and with great patience, humour and energy took us through céilí steps, house arounds, swings and all manner of figures over the better part of 4 hours. Comhgairdeas libhse a chailíní! We hope to see you back in Geneva.

Special thanks also go to Angela Jeangros who has done so much to keep Irish dance alive and who on her own mustered a troop of participants hailing from all corners of the globe. Likewise a big thanks to Christina O'Shaughnessy who rallied support considerably helping the turnout and also for making a video of the event. After the workshop we were treated to an impromptu session from Cork woman Susan McCarthy on the button accordion. Susan is a great dancer herself learning from her father who puts on sessions in the West Cork area. If you are up in Vevey look out for music and dance sessions from Susan in the Bout du Monde pub.

This was a pilot event and not heavily publicised (we must apologise for those who were unclear on the precise date and location). Considering that we were right in the middle of the ski season the very positive feedback and enjoyment by all encourages us to plan another workshop in the October time-frame. Maybe we can tack on a concert as well. You'll hear more towards October.

You can get a taste of the event and Susan's playing on www.youtube.com. Just search for "geneva irish".

Ranganna Oíche Gaeilge - Irish Language classes

Tá deireadh tagtha ar ár ranganna Earrach 2008. Cé gur tráthnóna grianmhar geal a bhí ann bhí 15 duine a tháinig chuig an rang deireannach. Breis is 20 daltaí a d'fhreastail ar na ranganna idir an dá sheisiún. Táimid fíorbhuíoch do ghach éinne a thug a n-am agus a dtacaíocht chun an teanga a choinneáil beo. Bhí sé sin go hiontach ar fad. Gan dabht ní amháin an tsuim sa teanga a thug na daoine le chéile ach an comhlúadar breá meidhreach agus sólaistí agus fionta den scoth gach seachtain sa seomra galánta san fhoirgneamh La Cité Universitaire. Go raibh míle maith ag na rannpháirtithe uilig i bhfad as bhur ndíograis agus bhur gcaic.

Glacaimid míle buíochas go háirithe le Seán Ó Donnghaile agus le Stiofán Ó Mathúna a chuidigh go mór leis an gcúrsa a réachtáil agus a bhí ann i gcónaí.

Beimid ag leanúint ar aghaidh leis na ranganna i mí Dheireadh Fómhair. Idir an dá linn coinnigí ag caint agus ag comhrá!

Our Irish language classes for Spring 2008 finished up early April and even on a bright sunny evening you were still 15 participants to turn up. Upwards of 20 participants attended the 2 sessions. Your time and support for the language is warmly acknowledged. No doubt not just the interest in the language brought everyone together but the convivial and friendly atmosphere and of course the culinary delights we sampled in the grandeur of the penthouse room in the Cité Universitaire each week. Our sincere thanks to all who participated in the courses for their dedication and humour.

Special thanks go to John Donnelly and Stephen O'Mahony for all their great support throughout in running the courses.

Classes will start up again in October. In the meantime keep talking...

Seachtain na Gaeilge sa Ghinéiv - Irish Language Week event in Geneva

Don chéad uair bhíomar in ann Seachtain na Gaeilge a cheiliúradh go hoifigiúil sa Ghinéiv. An-spraoi ar fad a bhí againn le seisiún tráth na gceist – ní raibh na ceisteanna comh héasca sin le comórtas bríomhar idir na rannpháirtithe agus rud beag conspóide – cairdiúil dar ndóigh. Is féidir leat triail a bhaint as féin ar ár bhforam Cois Locha.

Ag an sos bhí comhrá, deoch agus bia thar barr agus i ndáiríre an buaicphointe den tráthnóna. Bhí an bia ana-bhlasta le lán rudaí déanta baile – bairín breac ó Phaddy Rowe, bonnóga agus subh ó JeanMarie McAdams agus ina dteannta feoil thriomaithe, bradán agus fionta agus beoir de ghach chuile shórt. Mile buíochas do chách as bhur bhflaithiúlacht.

Cinnteach bhí sé deacair go leor tosnú arís i ndiaidh an tsosa ach rinne an seisiún karaoke an jab le Bean Pháidín, Óró sé do Bheatha Abhaile, Cailleach an Airgid, Níl sé ina Lá, Dúlaman na Binne Buí, Peigin Leitir Móir, Cad é sin don té sin agus chun deiridh le gach éinne ina sheasamh d'Amhrán na bhFiann!

Bígy linn an bhliain seo chugainn!

For the first time we were able to celebrate Seachtain na Gaeilge in Geneva officially – an event held annually to celebrate the Irish language. The table quiz drew keen competition and the questions were not so easy. At the break, wine, foods and company of the best were the real highlight of the evening. Short work was made of the tasty homemade barn brack from Paddy Rowe and the scones and jam from JeanMarie McAdams.

Further delicacies included dried meat and salmon as well as exotic wines and beers. Thanks to all for their participation and generosity. It was hard enough to start after the break but our Irish karaoke did the job with great favourites. At the end all on our feet for Amhrán na bhFiann.

Until next year!

Lá 'le Pádraig 2008 - Turas na nIarlaí Ultacha trasna na hÉilvéise - Lá cuimhneacháin stairiúil ar Dhroichead an Diabhail

St. Patrick's day 2008 - Journey of the Ulster Earls through Switzerland – historic remembrance day on the Teufelsbrücke

The sky was already greying over ominously when we reached Andermatt in the early morning. The village was blanketed in snow, the flurry becoming ever more persistent. We made our way to the Teufelsbrücke to join other arriving participants. Brief introductions. We clambered down the slippery path and on to the famous bridge spanned overhead by the highway and the railway line to Goeschenen. Below a steep ravine. We waited for the main party who had set off from Brunnen to Fluelen by boat in memory of the Earls' crossing of the lake from Lucerne. We had passed them by on the way down - as Denis McClean of GLAS put it in his write-up for the Irish Times (see below), "following in the invisible wake of the craft that carried the last princes of Gaelic Ireland". Their bus soon drew up, the Swiss police quickly moved into action for the attending dignitaries and traffic control. Onlookers gathered on the overhead walkway.

The party on the bridge now swelled. A convivial welcome from Ambassador Sharkey. The ranks had formed loosely. A burst of the drones on the pipes from clan leader Vincent O'Donnell rent the Alpine air summoning us to attention. A longer blast followed. Up went the banners, the green white and orange, the gold harp on its blue background, the white and red of the Swiss flag and the European Union flag, their vivid colours all in resplendent and defiant contrast to the grey sky above and the even starker bleak hue of the mountain rock. Led by the standard bearers comprising members of the Ouroboros theatre group dressed in medieval garb, suddenly we were off. Applause from our senior members and onlookers above on the overhead walkway. A proud moment. Just at the moment of crossing a train passed by overhead. Yes it did slow down as the curious passengers pressed their faces against the windows at the unfamiliar sight below.

(continued overleaf)



(Photograph courtesy of Urner Wochenblatt)

No doubt each of us carried his or her own thoughts as we trod the footsteps of the Earls and their retinue. Conditions then much worse than we faced on the day. A thought perhaps for their consternation at losing a significant portion of their monies or a momentary flashback to a time of history and the consequences it would generate.

Once across the bridge we mustered close together to hear a rousing and eloquent speech from Ambassador Sharkey recalling those events of 400 years ago to the day but also emphasising the symbolism of the bridge between Ireland and Europe in the modern day. In the background the faint sound of Raidió na Gaeltachta reporter Áine Ní Churráin making her recording of the event. Nobel Laureate John Hume was to officiate at the ceremony. Unfortunately he was incapacitated by a road traffic accident from which he has happily recovered since.

From the bridge we made our way to the St. Peter and Paul church with its imposing baroque architecture to celebrate a St. Patrick's Day mass. In front of its mighty altar the strains of harp, fiddle and uilleann pipes echoed around. The numbers swelled more with the presence of the local people who had heard that their village was to be focal point for the Irish horde that day. After a welcome, an excerpt from the diary of the O'Neills chronicler and liturgy readings - all as Gaeilge.

(continued overleaf)

From the church to the smaller chapel dedicated to the Irish monk Columbanus. A speech from the representative of the Swiss Foreign Ministry. A local historian advised us of a 5th language in Switzerland – an older strain of An Ghaeilge spoken in a small valley populated by the Irish monks.

Then the unveiling and dedication by Ambassador Sharkey of the memory plaque to recall to all who pass by that small corner in Switzerland the memory of the last of the Gaelic Earls of Ulster and their families as well as the hopes of their people that they carried with them. Faoi mar is cóir a bheith as Gaeilge. On the back text in German, Latin and English: “Here passed the last princes of Ireland”.

The official ceremonies over we poured into a local assembly hall to a magnificent spread of meats, hot and cold dishes, savouries, deserts and copious supply of liquid refreshments including much appreciated Gaelic coffees. Music, dancing, playreading, singing the perfect backdrop.

Meetings with Irish members from across Switzerland, Basel, Zurich, Lausanne and people who had travelled from far off places such as New York, the Ukraine to be here on the historic day.

Hearty congratulations to Ambassador Sharkey, the musicians and the whole organising team for a very special and unforgettable St. Patrick's Day commemoration and wonderful hospitality.

From Geneva the event was attended by GIA President Clare Schenker and husband Michel, Michael O'Callaghan, Vivien Sheridan, John Donnelly, Denis McClean and Paddy Tracey. The event was publicised in the GIA newsletter and invitations were open to all by registering with the Irish Embassy in Bern.

An Irishman's Diary – The Irish Times, Wednesday 26th March 2008

By Denis McClean – republished with permission of the author.

There was a dreamlike quality to our early morning passage across the velvet waters of Lake Lucerne following in the invisible wake of the craft that carried the last princes of Gaelic Ireland, Hugh O'Neill, Rory and Cahir O'Donnell, their families and servants to the small lakeside port of Fluelen where they disembarked around midnight on March 16th, 1608.

That was far from the mind of Vincent O'Donnell, a retired primary school teacher from the Rosses and the main mover behind the O'Donnell Clan Association which now has almost 20 years of quadricentennial events under its belt, related mainly to the Nine Years War and the Flight of the Earls.

As we talked, he summoned the photographer Rory O'Donnell over and asked him to pull up his shirt so I could admire a fine example of the "bol dearg", the red birthmark which gave Red Hugh O'Donnell his nickname and continues as a genetic marker among his descendants to this day.

We transferred to the bus which would carry us up into the mountains so we could cross The Devil's Bridge on foot. (continued overleaf)



(Photograph courtesy of John Donnelly)

The Gaelic scribe, Tadhg Ó Cianáin, who was on the original journey, has recorded how Hugh O'Neill on March 17th, 1608, lost a small fortune when one of his pack horses loaded with gold slipped on the bridge - an early lesson on the risks of putting all your money on one horse.

There was a quick drill for those carrying the tricolour, the O'Neill and O'Donnell flags and banners, and then we all fell in behind Vincent O'Donnell, the Irish Ambassador to Switzerland, James A Sharkey, and three actors in costume of the period from the Ouroboros Theatre Company, Denis Conway, Conan Sweeny and Tony Flynn.

With snowflakes, mist and the notes of the bagpipes swirling around us, thus began a very short St Patrick's Day parade over a deep canyon known as the Schöllenen Gorge at an altitude of 1,500 metres, and recorded for posterity by the assembled ranks of the Swiss media and Áine Ní Churráin from Raidió na Gaeltachta, who did a live broadcast from the bridge.

A green cloak was passed to Mr Sharkey as a symbol of the transition from Gaelic to modern Ireland, and 30 seconds of silence were observed in remembrance of the loss of the old Gaelic civilisation and the toll which the journey into exile took on the families who had left the pier at Rathmullan, Co Donegal, on that fateful September day in 1607, never to return.

The memory of the O'Donnell brothers, Rory and Cahir, who were to die the following year in Rome was evoked at a special St Patrick's Day Mass in the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Andermatt, by Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin's beautiful rendition of an achingly sad lament by the O'Donnell clan poet, Fearghal Óg Mac a'Bháird, which he wrote for their surviving sisters, Mary and Margaret.

The unexpected outpouring of Donegal Irish from the altar was almost too much for 86-year-old Michael O'Callaghan, who grew up in an Irish-speaking household in Gweedore and had journeyed up from Geneva where he spent most of his working life with the International Labour Organisation. "That's what old age does to you. The tears come easily," he smiled ruefully.

Just as Hugh O'Neill must have dearly missed the company of his dead friend and fellow-fighter, Red Hugh O'Donnell, on his Alpine journey, Mr Sharkey was forced to rise to the occasion without his good friend and fellow Derryman, the Nobel laureate John Hume, 'who sent his regrets for non-attendance due to a traffic accident.

Jim Sharkey, on his last diplomatic posting, took on the mantle of his fellow latter-day prince of Ulster and read out the speech John Hume had prepared for delivery in the small 13th century church dedicated to St Colomanus on the wayside of the centuries-old road which the Earls took as they climbed through the snow to the high St Gotthard Pass and then on into Italy.

Hume observed that the flight of the Earls brought to an end the old Gaelic civil order which had endured for 1,000 years and "heralded also a momentous century of change and conflict throughout Ireland, arising from the Plantation of Ulster by new settlers from Scotland and England, whose repercussions have resonated down to our time.

"Importantly, also, it symbolised the inauguration of a new and more intense phase of Irish engagement with Europe encapsulated succinctly and eloquently in the theme of our celebrations today, 'Droichead Idir Éireann agus An Eoraip' - 'A Bridge Between Ireland and Europe.' "

The Ambassador cut a fine figure in his green cloak as the snow fell on him and the many hardy souls who had made the journey including singer Paul Brady, Monaghan poet Pádraig Rooney, the Joycean scholar, Fritz Senn, the Zurich-based harpist, Catherine Rhatigan, and the entire cast of Brian Friel's *Making History*, a play inspired by Hugh O'Neill and specially revived by Ouroboros's artistic director, Denis Conway, as part of the Flight of the Earls 400th anniversary commemoration which is supported by Culture Ireland.

Before heading off to drown the shamrock in a nearby Swiss army barracks, all gathered round to admire the simple memorial hewn by local stonemasons from apple-green serpentine rock taken from a nearby quarry and embossed with a harp and the words "Imeacht na hEarlai" (the flight of the Earls).

On the reverse side will be written in English, German and Latin "Here passed the last princes of Ireland."

Other Flight of the Earls events

by Clare Schenker

We would like to extend our congratulations and deepest thanks to H.E. Ambassador Jim Sharkey for having initiated and organised a series of events commemorating the 400 years of the Flight of the Earls journey through Switzerland. It was quite an incredible feat, starting in Basel, then moving to Zurich, Andermatt and the Ticino, each event unique in itself, which left those of us who participated deeply moved and privileged to partake in such a historical event.

The official opening of the Exhibition of the Flight of the Earls was held in the Museum Kleines Klingental, Basel on Friday, 7th March. This exhibition focussed on the major political events surrounding the departure of these Gaelic Lords. A manuscript account of their journey, maintained by the Gaelic scribe, was also exhibited. Ambassador Sharkey hosted a very copious cocktail, during which Phil Coulter gave us the pleasure of his playing the piano, while his wife accompanied him in a few songs. The Lord Mayors of Derry and Donegal were also present as was a representative of Baselstadt. A most enlightening and very enjoyable evening was had by all.

The undernoted article appeared on-line in IEN No. 1,107, 21 April, 2008 :

"Cardinal in Rome to commemorate Flight of the Earls Cardinal Sean Brady was in Rome last weekend commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Flight of the Earls. Last Sunday he celebrated Mass in the church of San Pietro Montorio where Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Rory O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell, are buried. Among the congregation were O'Neill family descendants from France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. During his homily the Cardinal contrasted the antagonistic relationship between Ireland and Britain in 1608 with the situation today. He suggested that the EU had played a large part in this transformation and in particular in bringing peace to the North."



Geneva Irish narrowly fail to retain the Celtic Cup

by Barry Ardiff

The Celtic Cup returned to Scottish hands after a break following the first game of the 2008 series on Saturday 26th April in Vessy. The Irish looked the part in their brand new kit generously sponsored by Charly O'Neill's Irish pub.

Both sides had big squads to choose from, but the Irish first half tactic of 5 minute rolling substitutions, in an attempt to confuse the opposition, somewhat backfired, effectively giving the Scots a 2-0 head start. After only a minute of play, Jack Laurie's youth and speed allowed him to nip through the not quite yet warmed up Irish defence, to put Keith Milne through to slip the ball under your correspondent, the Irish keeper. Minutes later, the Irish failed to clear their lines and a scrambled goal from close range put them two goals behind.

The Irish rallied however, and managed to avoid leaking any more goals, while not creating too many of their own chances. A second half change of tactic in remaining unchanged for 20 minutes, swung the game in their favour and only solid, kept the two goal advantage intact. Eventually, the Irish perseverance paid off and Santiago Cornejo's long range lob just dropped under the bar to reduce the deficit to one.

The highlight of the game was about to come, with the Scots conceding a free kick outside the box. Irish centre half Rodney Harrington fired a seemingly unstoppable free kick toward the top left corner, but Ian Wise managed a remarkable diving save to tip the ball onto the post and away to safety. The boys in green pressed for an equaliser but were unable to bring the game level and the cup was passed on to Scots captain Richard Newman.

“Fighting for Peace” – new association launched

The Irish Embassy in Berne and the GIA were represented at the launch of this Association, at UNICEF offices in Geneva on 17th April. Fighting for Peace is the brainchild of Carl Emery (Switzerland), former World Champion in Kickboxing and Billy Murray (Northern Ireland), 4 times former world champion in Kickboxing. Both have recognised that one of the best ways to promote understanding is to give children from all walks of life, the opportunity to interact and to respect each other through sport. The GIA Committee had its first contact with Kickboxing in 2006 when Billy Murray brought a group of Belfast youths to an event in Villars, Switzerland.

The Association has been set up with the aim of promoting peace and respect, through sport. It will bring together interested parties in martial arts and combat sports, in Switzerland, and abroad (particularly UK and Ireland). It will organise inter-community meetings, and/or international events (competitions, training, courses, trips, demonstrations etc). The Association will particularly focus its activities for the benefit of disadvantaged children.

The Association was born out of a trip organised to Switzerland in 2006, and out of ongoing work in Ireland, which sees children from all sides of the community, the Falls and Shankhill, working together, competing and expanding their horizons. The trip to Villars resulted from months of fundraising by the children and their families to help make the dream of heading abroad a reality.

“It was a brilliant thing to witness,” said ProKick head coach Billy Murray. “For many of these kids – all of whom are aged between 6-12 years old – this was their first time on a plane and their first trip abroad. They were selected on merit and it was down to the dedication of the children and their families that we were able to take so many of them to the centre of Europe, Switzerland. The sport receives no funding in Northern Ireland, unlike in other European countries, and the only way to give these children such a wonderful opportunity was to fundraise ourselves.”

Susan Gregory, Consul General travelled from Geneva to watch the youngsters in action. She said from the ringside in Villars, “This is a great thing that I have witnessed tonight. Children from all walks of life involved in a sport that is steeped in respect for your opponent. I was particularly impressed in how committed the coaches and everyone involved were to make events like this a success. I’m leaving here tonight with a different perception of the sport of kickboxing. It’s a great sport for young and old alike.”

In Billy's words 'we offer a way to get kids active, to get them off their sofas and to enjoy running around and jumping about. It teaches self-discipline and self-respect. It combats bullying. It's an amazing tool for bringing kids out of themselves. It's a real growth sport amongst the young of Northern Ireland. For some, it's about having fun, for some it's about taking first steps towards a ring career. We have a space for everyone.'

The Association hopes to take this to the next level, by promoting peace through sport, by offering opportunities for children to learn about themselves, and about others. And, above all to help promote understanding and respect between communities, and nations.

More information: www.prokick.com

Your Association Needs You !

Your suggestions, ideas, views, wishes for future events and your feedback on past events are invaluable in keeping your Association alive and kicking. We strive towards meeting your needs and make every effort to ensure that you enjoy the events we organise and whet the appetite for the next time round. If you have an idea for an event or activity and would like to organise it under the GIA banner, please contact our Events Coordinator, Clare Schenker at Geneva.irish@ireland.com, or telephone 079 303 7460.