

FOR THE LOVE OF EMER

Artist: Martin Heron



The impressive 9m stainless steel sculpture *For the Love of Emer*, was commissioned by Armagh City and District Council and installed in Scotch Street in March 2010. It depicts the character of one of Ireland's most famous warriors – Cuchulainn who has strong associations with Armagh. Though famed for his heroic acts, the artist has chosen to draw on an unusual aspect of the Cuchulainn story that involves the warrior coming to terms with a challenge faced by us all – the art of balancing ourselves with the world around us through hard work and perseverance.

The story goes that the young Cuchulainn was so beautiful the Ulstermen of Emain Macha worried that, without a wife of his own, he would 'steal their wives and ruin their daughters'. They search all over Ireland for a suitable wife for him, but Cuchulainn was not easy to please. He wanted the most beautiful, and most talented woman in all of Ireland. He decided that Emer, the daughter of Forgall Monach, was the woman that he wanted. But when he went to woo Emer she mocked him telling him he was 'but a boy without beard or deeds to his name'. Cuchulainn vowed to prove himself in battle and warrior deeds. Emer said she would consider marrying him if he went and got the proper warrior training.

Forgall was opposed to the match. He suggested that Cuchulainn should train in arms with the

renowned warrior-woman Scathach on the Isle of Skye, hoping the ordeal would be too much for him and he would be killed. Cuchulainn takes up the challenge. Scathach teaches Cuchulainn all the arts of war: how to use the 'salmon leap', how to use the Gae Bulga – a barbed spear thrown with the foot, and how to balance on the butt of a spear or rim of a shield – it is that discipline that we see Cuchulainn has mastered in the sculpture.



Cuchulainn returned to Ireland fully trained, but Forgall still refused to let him marry Emer. Cuchulainn storms Forgall's fortress, killing twenty of Forgall's men, abducts Emer and steals Forgall's treasure. Forgall himself falls from the ramparts to his death. Cuchulainn and Emer then returned to Emain Macha and were married.



Visitors can find out more about Cuchulainn and Emer at the nearby Navan Centre & Fort visitor Centre which is situated 3 km west of the sculpture on the Killylea Road, Armagh BT60 4LD, **028 3752 9644**.



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