



OLAF AND HUGH'S ADVENTURES AT ATHLONE CASTLE



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*Winners of Athlone Castle's 2021 Cruinniú na nÓg
Creative Writing Competition for Children*

Supported by Creative Ireland and Westmeath County Council



INTRODUCTION

Who would' have thought Hugh the Williamite soldier bought his clothes in Eddie Murphy Menswear, or that Olaf the Viking would pop into Smyths for his Christmas shopping? And Brian from Donegal, what exactly was he doing at King Henry's great ceremony?



Hugh and Olaf, King Henry and Athlone Castle are as slippery as the oil Hugh poured on the dock in yet another prank. They slip in and out of the curtains round the Castle, through windows and dungeons, down cannons and all around the stone walls. And they slip in and out of history.

Every one of the young authors gathered in this collection - their eyes and ears open for the telling detail, for the trace of history trailing down the Main St - knows that everything you need to tell a good tale is right on your doorstep. All you need do is step outside and open your eyes.

And so, it's an absolute delight to read these winning entries to the Athlone Castle Creative Writing Competition for Criunniú na nÓg 2021, and step from Athlone Library to Glendeer Pet Farm, from the 14th to the 21st Century, from horseback to cannon fodder and from grand ceremony to the lowest dungeon. But always in the dazzling company of a right pair of troublemakers, Hugh and Olaf. Let them take you on a journey now through an Athlone you never knew existed but was right there all the time, flowing along with the Shannon.

Keith Payne,

Writer, Poet, The John Broderick Writer in Residence 2021

GET INSPIRED!!!

"He'll never
find me here.
Hehe! Hehe!
Hehe!"



"You call **THIS**
music?!?"





1ST PLACE AGES 7-11

Olaf The Viking and Hugh The Williamite Soldier's Latest Adventure

By Sophia Downey, Age 8

Olaf and Hugh were very excited at the prospect of the clothes shops re-opening after lockdown. They had both grown so much during lockdown that they desperately needed new clothes. The opening of Athlone Castle was drawing near, and they wanted to look their best for meeting all the visitors. Hugh the Williamite made on-line appointments for Eddie Murphy Menswear and Diesel. When Hugh the Williamite told Olaf the Viking his plans, Olaf immediately told him he had a better idea! He told Hugh to save his one4all voucher that he had got for Christmas to buy some much needed toys in Smyths. Olaf told Hugh that he had a friend that could find him the trendiest jeans in Ireland for only a tenner. Hugh immediately went home and luckily enough managed to count ten euro from his piggybank, all his savings. Olaf arranged for Hugh to meet his friend, Magic Marvin outside Golden Island Shopping Centre. Hugh was so excited he couldn't wait to get his new jeans. He met Magic Marvin outside the shopping centre at 5pm on Friday evening. Magic Marvin gave Hugh a brown paper bag in exchange for his ten euro.

Hugh couldn't wait to get home to try them on, so he went into the toilets in Burger King. They fitted perfectly. Hugh put his old jeans into the paper bag and threw them into the nearest bin. He was so delighted to see the back of those jeans. Hugh was as proud as punch walking up the Main Street on his way back to the Castle. He could see people looking at him and smiling. He felt on top of the world. He was so excited for the re-opening of the Castle later that evening. Olaf was waiting for Hugh at the entrance to the castle. There was a huge crowd at the Castle. RTÉ News was even there. Silence fell once Hugh walked in. Then everyone burst out laughing. Hugh couldn't understand. Olaf seemed to take delight in informing Hugh that his new jeans were in fact invisible! Olaf's friend Magic Marvin had tricked him. The worst bit was that Hugh had his favourite Frozen underwear on! The re-opening of Athlone Castle was an unforgettable event. Hugh didn't see the funny side and immediately set about planning his revenge on Olaf!

2ND PLACE AGES 7-11

Ceremony Chaos

By Orla Wiseman, Age 9

One day, King Henry of Athlone Castle was holding a ceremony in the main hall. Many people from all around Ireland were coming. Olaf the Viking and Hugh the Williamite Solider were told to read a few lines of the opening speech.

King Henry wasn't sure about letting Olaf and Hugh read something, but he said it was worth a shot. Olaf and Hugh are Athlone Castle's resident troublemakers. They always find a way to make things go wrong.

Olaf and Hugh had to practice their speech. Olaf wanted to be better than Hugh and Hugh wanted to be better than Olaf. So, when Hugh went to tell King Henry, he was ready, Olaf took Hugh's speech and scribbled on it so he couldn't read it.

Then, suddenly Hugh came back into the room. 'MY SPEECH!!!' shouted Hugh. Then Hugh grabbed Olaf's speech and ripped it up. 'MY SPEECH!!!' shouted Olaf. Now both of their speeches were ruined. Hugh's speech was scribbled on and Olaf's was all ripped up, so he had to Sellotape it back together. This is what they looked like.



Hugh:

Welcome to the Athlone Castle ceremony.
Hope you all enjoy it.

only room in Henry this meet one Here, will
very King the you tonight and **Olaf:** .

Yes, they are very messy, but King Henry doesn't know that. This is what they were supposed to look like.

Hugh:

Welcome to the Athlone Castle ceremony. Hope you all enjoy it.

Olaf:

Here, tonight in this very room you will meet the one and only King Henry.

It was the night of the ceremony, and Olaf and Hugh were about to perform their speeches. "Here it goes" said King Henry to himself. Hugh started to read his speech. "Elcom tu th Alone Catle eremy. Hop yo al ejo i." said Hugh. "BOO!" shouted the crowd. Hugh went off the stage and when Olaf headed onto the stage, Hugh climbed up the curtains and they fell on top of Olaf. "OW!!" shouted Olaf. Then Olaf threw the curtains off him and he started to read his speech.

“Only room in Henry this meet one here, will see very King the you tonight and Olaf” said Olaf. “BOO!” shouted the crowd again. “This ceremony is rubbish!” shouted someone called Margerete Thompson. “Yeah” shouted Brian Daly. “I can’t believe I travelled all the way from Donegal to this mess” shouted Ell Chester.

Everyone left and the ceremony was ruined. King Henry was really mad. He punished Olaf and Hugh, so they had to water all of the flowers at Athlone Castle. Instead of watering them, they poured water down each other’s backs.

King Henry was sick of Olaf and Hugh’s nonsense, so he made a rule chart



Rules

1. Don't hang off the curtains in the ceremony hall.
2. Wash your hands before serving.
3. Don't enter King Henry's office without knocking
4. Don't let Olaf and Hugh attend any occasion.

3RD PLACE AGES 7-11

The Medieval Fair

By Eleanor Neary, Age 8

It was finally Saturday morning, I jumped out of bed and woke my sister Catherine. We ran down the stairs excitedly to put on our costumes for the Medieval Fair. After breakfast we all jumped in the car and headed off. When we arrived, we saw big, bright balloons and grandad halfway up the ramp. Catherine and I bolted up the ramp to hug grandad. Grandad brought us up to the Castle. At the top we could see down to the Shannon, the Viking boat was pulling in. I ran down to the boat to see who was on board. Hugh the soldier and Olaf the Viking jumped off. I opened my backpack then Hugh and Olaf hopped in. I let Hugh and Olaf out at the top of the ramp so we could have fun in the Castle. First, we stopped at the arts and crafts. While Catherine and I were getting our faces painted Hugh and Olaf caused chaos!

They threw feathers everywhere, put their feet in the paint and walked all over the walls! I quickly opened my backpack before Joanna found out who did it. It was lunchtime and we were back down at reception for lunch. Joanna was there and she was wondering who made the mess upstairs! After lunch it was time for "Dig it with Dave". We all headed outside to the "Dig it with Dave" tent. Catherine and Olaf started to dig one side while Hugh and I started the other side.

Catherine and I found lots of treasure. I was digging and saw two big hills in the sand the same size as Olaf and Hugh! I had to dig quickly, down deep under the sand so they could get out. Finally, they got out and hopped into my backpack before anyone saw them. The day was coming to an end, so we headed back down to the courtyard to listen to some music and watch the sword fighting. Hugh and Olaf were having a great time dancing on the Castle walls. I could hear Viking Mike calling for the last boat of the day. I knew it was time for us to say goodbye. We quickly left the Castle and ran down to the boat just in time. They hopped on the back as I waved the boat off.

1ST PLACE AGES 12-17

A Road Trip Around Athlone

By Lily Casey, Aged 13

Sun shone through Athlone Castle's freshly polished windows, as an elegantly dressed man dusted the displays and wiped down the windowsills. This man's name was Hugh. He took pride in making sure his home was clean and tidy, although he never understood why the tourists of the Castle commented on the war displays, and boring old paintings instead of his freshly cleaned floor. "But it could not be helped" he thought, when suddenly, a garishly dressed red head stormed into the hall. "AAAAHHH! MUST DESTROY EVERYTHING!!!" he screamed, holding his lit torch high in the air. Hugh dropped his duster and screamed at a decibel so high that even he couldn't hear the full extent of it. In fact, it scared the suspected Viking so bad that he dropped his torch on a 500,000-euro rug! "Do you know how much that rug costs!" screamed Hugh. "What do you mean?!?" said the man who was obviously not used to raiding in the twenty first century. It took a while but after Hugh had explained the concept of money in the modern world the Viking seemed even more panicked. "I don't have any money though!" "Yeah, apparently they don't let Vikings open bank accounts" smirked Hugh. "Anyways, I have an idea for a different type of payment". And so, Hugh convinced the red head to let him lead them on a journey around Athlone, so maybe he wouldn't try and burn it down. They told each other their names (Olaf the Viking and Hugh the Williamite) and set off on a trip across the world! Or maybe just one town.

First, they travelled to Glendeer Pet Farm, where Olaf tried to raise an army of goats and was promptly bitten. Hugh wasn't much of an animal lover (a traumatic experience with a pigeon set him off them for life) So they didn't stay long... In fact, they probably wouldn't be allowed back.

Later they tried the Athlone library. Olaf, who was an avid reader, stuck out like a sore thumb in the children's section. "Mum, why is there an old man reading Tilly's tea party in the corner of the room?" said one of the children in the library. They were kicked out almost immediately.

After that disaster, they drove to one more location, Bay Sports. Hugh, who didn't know how to swim stayed out of the water shivering in full scuba gear, occasionally dipping one toe in the water. Olaf on the other hand disobeyed every single rule and broke 7 bones. "It was all worth it" he mumbled in full cast limping on the pavement, crutch in hand.

Hugh was about to give up when he thought of one last place. He blindfolded Olaf as they got closer and soon Olaf felt himself stumbling down stone stairs, even more curious than he was before. Suddenly his blindfold was removed, and he saw a version of what had been his happy home for years aplenty. "A dungeon!" He squealed with glee. "And it's in the same place you attempted to destroy" Hugh murmured smugly. Olaf took up residence in the Castle hissing at tourists and biting people. And legend says that Hugh is trying to find the most extravagant pair of socks.

2ND PLACE AGES 12-17

The Tale of Olaf the Viking and Hugh the Williamite Soldier

By Jumoke Adagun, Age 16

Hugh the Williamite Soldier was looking for some fun.
Even as the shrill winds blew,
Olaf the Viking would still play too.
“Hee, hee, hee, he’ll never find me.”
Said Hugh quite comfortably as he stayed in a tree.
Olaf was searching and looking for clues.
But he felt so helpless, he gave up at noon.
Poor Olaf was tired, his face in a pout.
But Hugh was excited and started to shout.
“Olaf! Olaf! You didn’t find me!”
“While you were out resting, I was up in a tree!”
Olaf woke up and looked like he had been crying.
He was upset he didn’t find out where Hugh had been hiding.
“Don’t worry” said Hugh. “There’s plenty to be done.”
So, Hugh brought Olaf to the Castle to have some fun.

Inside the castle, Olaf blew his horn happily.
However, Hugh thought the music was being played rather badly.
Olaf was so excited; he jumped and almost fell flat.
He burst Hugh’s balloon and set fire to his hat!
Hugh was strapped tightly and secured on a target,
but Olaf was having fun and didn’t seem to mind it!
Finally, Hugh got Olaf back from all his laughing,

when Olaf's face got bombarded with pink sugary icing!
On a calming stroll, during a break from the shenanigans
Hugh and Olaf met one of Winston Churchill's grandkids!
Hugh and Olaf's break would soon come to an end,
and they decided to go fishing near the river bend.
Hugh wished it were a big fish that was pulling on his hook,
but it was one of Olaf's boots, straight from his foot!
Olaf laughed in the boat and he laughed at the round tower,
but the tables had turned, and it was now Hugh with the power.
The boys were getting tired.
And the moon was getting higher.
Olaf just thought that he would scare Hugh one last time,
but Hugh had the last laugh as he covered Olaf in slime!

3RD PLACE AGES 12-17

The Wrong Robber

By Ben Morgan, Age 12

One day, I woke up to the noisy, loud banging of Olaf chucking rocks at my window. The guards outside my door burst in ready to fight and were very annoyed about the fact it was just Olaf because they love to fight off thieves.

I quickly got dressed because the banging was driving me mad. I ran down with an angry look on my face because I was having a lovely sleep, I murmured “hello” to him and we headed down for breakfast. We had a stunning bowl of porridge with honey. I headed outside and saw Olaf running out with a handful of sweets, and we sprinted like mad, and we hid in a tree to enjoy them.

We decided to go horse riding in the woods, and we headed to our secret hideout and played archery. On our way back we saw two people jumping out of the Castle!

We were very confused by the people who jumped out, and for some reason they looked like us. We rode up to the castle to investigate and saw ten guards and the King and Queen marching out of the castle. They sent the guards to arrest us, the King looked angry while the Queen looked upset and disappointed, we asked why, and the king said “Why WHY! WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHY? You know well what you did, you robbed the Castle and hid the loot you robbed

all the gold and silver that would go to the Castle and the whole kingdom of Athlone.”

So, we were sent to the dungeons, so confused and upset about it all and all we wanted was to leave and clear our name. That night the guards fell asleep as did I and then Olaf woke me up and whispered, “what are you sleeping for, come on”. I was so confused until I remembered Olaf knows this castle inside and out and he found a way to escape. He found a broken tile and pulled it up, and we crawled into the sewers underneath. It stunk, I never smelled anything so foul. We were in there for about two hours, and I really wanted a bubble bath like the servants would make me, I bet this was just a normal day for Olaf, because you would think he never had a bath even before we went into the sewer. We got out and got our horses and rode off to try clear our names and catch the thieves. While we were at our hideout, Olaf reminded me that they would have weapons, so we got sword and bows and left.

When we got there the fight started almost immediately, I fought evil Hugh and he was a brilliant swordsman, but I was better and won so I tied him up and went to help Olaf.

I didn't know which is which until I remembered the real Olaf would smell bad (well worse than a normal Olaf), so I smelled both of them and found out and defeated evil Olaf with ease.

We got the King and he came and arrested them, and our names were finally cleared.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Chillies and Oil

By Elih Kelly, Age 7

This is a story about two friends called Olaf and Hugh. Olaf is a Viking, he has orange, messy hair, a big beard and a wild look in his eye. He carries an old golden sword on his back that he has had since he was a boy. Olaf lives in Athlone Castle with his friend Hugh the Williamite soldier. Hugh has black hair and a small beard. He is very mannerly and never has a speck of dirt on his red uniform. He carries a shiny brown rifle, everywhere he goes. Olaf and Hugh have known each other since they were boys. They have been playing tricks on each other since they were seven years old, when Olaf tricked Hugh by pouring a bucket of water over his head!

One morning there was a light breeze outside and the sun was shining. Olaf got up early to do some baking, Olaf is in the kitchen and he is baking ten pies. One is especially for Hugh. When they come out of the hot oven, they smell mouth-watering and they fill the room with their deliciousness. He lets the pies cool down and an hour later Hugh comes into the kitchen and sees the lovely golden pies. Olaf gives him a pie full of chillies to taste. Hugh takes a gargantuan bite out of the chilli pie, immediately he starts to breathe fire because his mouth is burning hot. "YOU" shouted Hugh as Olaf ran off laughing. Hugh runs to the fridge and pours a large carton of milk into his mouth to help cool it down. Hugh decides to get revenge on Olaf straight away, for playing a dirty trick on him.

Hugh has planned a trick especially for Olaf by the river. For the trick he needs all the fishing gear from the cold dungeon. He carries it outside to where Hugh and Olaf always fish. Hugh then goes to get some oil from the kitchen in the Castle. He brings the oil out to the dock and empties the bottle beside the fishing gear. He then sits on the dock and begins to fish. He has put Olaf's fishing rod beside him on the slippery oil. As soon as Olaf spots Hugh fishing without him he hurries outside to him. He sees his own fishing rod beside Hugh and as he goes to pick it up, he slips on the oil and into the River Shannon. "Hahahahaha" cries Hugh. Olaf climbs out of the freezing cold water, then sprints back to the Castle to dry himself off.

Later that evening Olaf was still trying to dry off by the warm fire with his friend Hugh, who is still drinking milk by the gallon. This is a typical day in Athlone castle for Olaf and Hugh, where the long eerie hallways, the big rooms and the river make the perfect home for the troublemakers to get up to plenty of mischief.

Olaf and HughThe Best of Enemies

By Norah Muldowney, Age 11

Olaf is a Viking who lives in Athlone Castle. He used to go to lots of different countries to raid their lands. Then a storm came and washed Olaf's boat up the Shannon to Athlone Castle. Hugh is a Williamite soldier who fought bravely in many battles. He retired to live in Athlone Castle three years ago. Both Olaf and Hugh despise each other.

Hugh skipped into the courtyard beaming from ear to ear. "What makes you so happy today?" Olaf asked as he spotted the Williamite soldier dancing and spinning until he nearly danced off the edge. "It is my birthday, look what I got from my mummy" Hugh said and took off his shoes to show Olaf his new socks. My mummy got me my favourite coloured socks. Hugh wiggled his toes in his new snotty green socks. "Your birthday, hey" Olaf muttered under his breath as an evil grin spread across his face. Olaf led Hugh over towards the cannons "I have hidden your gift in the cannon over there" Olaf lied. Hugh sprinted over to the cannon and peered inside. "I don't see anything in here" Hugh shouted. "Look closer" Olaf replied nastily. The Viking snuck behind Hugh and shoved him head first into the cannon.

Olaf struck a match and started a countdown. "Ten, nine, eight" Hugh gave out a muffled cry as he frantically kicked the air. "Six, five, four...." Olaf continued. Hugh reached out and grabbed Olaf by

the wrists. “KA BOOM”. The two of them sailed through the air and landed with a splash in the River Shannon.

Hugh and Olaf got back to the Castle and were shivering with the cold. “My new socks are ruined” Hugh told Olaf through chattering teeth. Olaf looked at Hugh and did an enormous sneeze all over Hugh’s face. Hugh wiped the glob off his face with a handkerchief. “I have a cold” Olaf moaned. Hugh put a worried expression on his face “You might have Covid” he said in a grave voice “we need to give you a vaccine quickly”. Hugh brought Olaf to a bench and sat him down. “Wait here” he told him. Hugh took out his longest, bluntest needle and jabbed Olaf in his bottom. “Owwwwww” Olaf screamed through his tears.

The best of enemies, Olaf the Viking and Hugh the Williamite soldier, called a truce for the rest of Hugh’s birthday.

Vase the Truth
By Julia Turner, Age 12

Olaf sat on the wet grass outside Athlone Castle. It had been three days. Three days since Hugh had been captured. Three days since the sun shone. He thought life would be better with Hugh behind bars. It just wasn't.

"Oww!" he exclaimed. A spider crawled away from the Viking, smirking. Maybe it was the venom or maybe it was the loneliness, but something sparked inside him. He set to work devising a plan to rescue Hugh.

He knew the King kept a plan of the Castle in his bedroom. How, was that from a different story? Hugh and Olaf had been engaged in a so-called "friendly" fight where Hugh shot Olaf out of a cannon. Try and guess where he landed. Wrong! He landed face down in the drawer with the plans in it. Afterwards, the king decided they should be separated so he put Hugh in jail. Bad choice apparently.

He returned to the same place, narrowly avoiding the guards on the way. Which is a fancy way to say they followed him. He legged it to the courtyard.

When he did get there, it was dark. He couldn't see the map properly. But he saw the word "dungeon" and headed towards there. He saw the guards behind him and clambered into the first window he saw. Dungeons don't normally have windows.

Olaf fell with a clatter, bottom first, into a vase. This was no dungeon. He heard the Queen singing in the shower next to him, suddenly she stopped. “Is that you Mr Tiddlywinks?” Olaf was not a cat, nor had he a name like that.

In a foolish attempt to remove his rear end from the Queen’s favourite vase, Olaf broke it. Unaware of the piece he left stuck to his bottom, he hurried out the window. Looking at the map again, the dungeon was next to the bathroom. Correcting his mistake, Olaf banged on the barred dungeon window.

“Psst, Hugh, it’s me!” Hugh didn’t even look up. Now, Olaf is a Viking leading a simple life, but even he knows it is good manners for someone to look at who is talking to them. In fact, he got so upset at Hugh about this that he broke out in a war of words and accidentally alerted the guards who were clueless until then, still searching for Olaf. To say the least they were not happy. Hugh was not helping. “Way to go, moron” he sighed.

1 week later...

Olaf looked at his new cellmate. Both he and Hugh had been locked up not for the escape, but for the vase. The King had decided that they would eventually get along if they were stuck with each other. That was the only thing that was not going to happen...

Moral of the story: if you plan on breaking someone out of jail, read the map first so you don’t end up in the Queen’s bathroom and break her favourite vase





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