

Celtic Guide

Volume 2, Issue 7 – July 2013



Villains

From the Editor



Who knew villains could be so popular? We have a jam-packed issue ranging from trolls to giants, from bewitching women to evil men. Villains come in all shapes and sizes, some harmless, some dangerous, some human and some not so human, but all of them quite interesting.

This month's cover is courtesy of Larry Andrews, and this shady character looks like the epitome of a cornered rat. What his crimes were, who knows, but his outcome is likely certain – death at the hands of pursuers, or on the chopping block. Larry has also blessed us with one of his poetic versions of an historical Celtic legend.

We have another new poem on villains, which is a forerunner to a special issue we will publish in September with the theme of 'The Muse' – an issue that will generally forego the non-fiction narrative in favor of the poetic and artistic. But first we have a wonderful July issue on 'Villains' and an upcoming August theme of 'Archetypes' to whet your whistle.

As with most of our issues, we find some interesting twists and turns to July's theme, from an evil amulet to the horrors of torture, from power hungry "leaders" to the lowest of the low. Villainy is certainly nothing to aspire to, yet we hope these stories help fill in some gaps, and answer some of the questions of Celtic history . . . which is, of course, our goal.

As we all pretty much know by now, humankind is its own worst enemy. Mother Nature and the Heavens have provided ample to sustain us, yet the greed of the few, the power hungry, the bad seed . . . something causes a few to attempt to ruin it for the rest of us. This has happened from time immemorial and is not likely to stop soon.

In the long run, the villain usually pays the price.

I've seen this happen in dramatic fashion with some bad people I have known. Recent history shows us examples of evil leaders in many countries dying disgraceful deaths. It also shows this to be true in Celtic history - from King James I of Scotland, found hiding in a sewer pipe and summarily assassinated, to Cardinal Beaton, being killed and literally hung out to dry, to countless criminals whose heads graced poles at castle walls. Of course, we are well aware one man's villain can be another man's hero. Think of the terrible death William Wallace endured, while thousands cheered his demise, and yet today, in Scotland, he is one of the greatest heroes of all time.

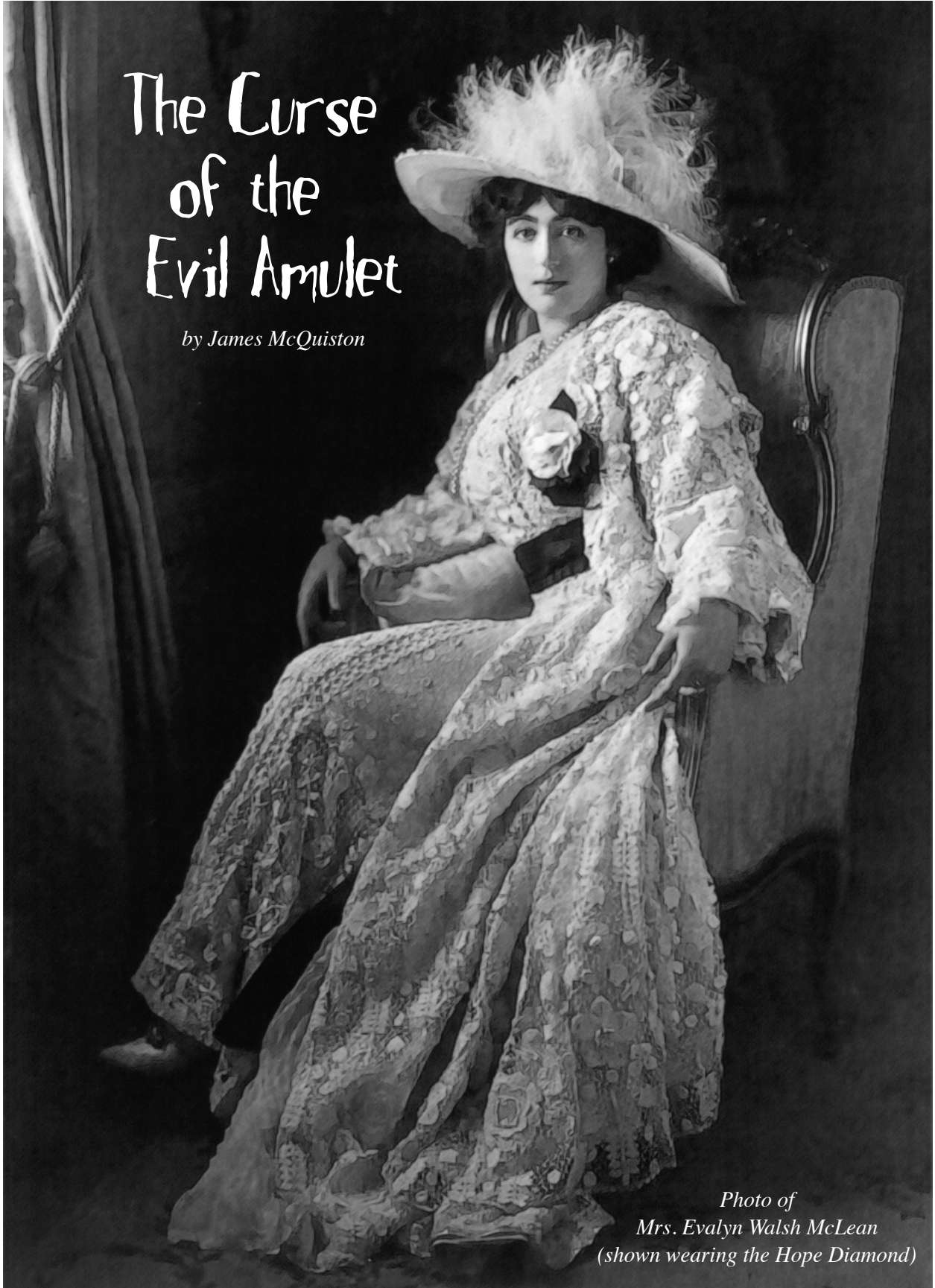
In addition to Scotland – Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall are three other Celtic Nations, along with Portugal, that are mentioned in this issue of the Guide in regard to villains, plus a great article on Julius Caesar, who likely annihilated more Celts than any other single man.

There is enough evil to go around, and even some terrible human behavior, such as human sacrifice and witch burning, which at the time were deemed necessary, but now make us look at those who carried them out with a very critical eye.

The bad news - people will continue to play the role of villains until such time as the human race collectively grows up, or dies out. The good news - what goes around comes around. I've seen it happen so many times, up close and personal. So here's to the 'straight and narrow' for the world, and here's to the villains just for this special, interesting issue of the Celtic Guide.

The Curse of the Evil Amulet

by James McQuiston



*Photo of
Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean
(shown wearing the Hope Diamond)*

Humans have been collecting shiny objects for thousands of years, often hanging them around their necks either for good luck or to accent their beauty or handsomeness – in some cases even to distinguish their place in society.

Most generally, these amulets are considered at least neutral if not lucky.

Rarely is an amulet found to be evil or bad luck and they are seldom considered as villains in their own right. But here are two cases, both with Celtic connections, that defy that logic.

In addition to jewels and stones, two items found by medieval Celts and Vikings were prehistoric arrowheads and stone axes. These were often stumbled upon after a major storm, when the dirt around them had been washed away. Even in North America many ‘arrowhead hunters’ know enough to wait until a good rain has fallen to begin their quest.

In Celtic and Viking countries alike the stone axe or ‘hammer’ became associated with the thunderbolt (as in Thor’s hammer) due to this phenomenon. Also, prehistoric arrowheads were said to be fairy or elf arrowheads (because of

their smaller size) and to be dropped down from the clouds by the rain. It is not too surprising that, with no science or history to go by, these often superstitious people would assign some magical reason for the sudden appearance of these oddities.

It often followed that bad luck might be assigned to them.

At left are two examples of ‘fairy arrowheads’ mounted in silver from the 17th century. The upper illustration (created

in the late 19th century) shows the front and back of one such item reportedly worn around the neck of an old Scottish woman for a half a century. The engraving is most curious with an I, another I, and an R, and with a figure 8 below that, followed by a down arrow.

The lower illustration (also from that period) shows a front view with the letters MC on it, and an up arrow at the bottom. During the 19th century this specimen made its way from Edinburgh, Scotland, to a museum at Lausanne, Switzerland, most likely the *Musée de l’Élysée*.

Where this second example resides, today, is anyone’s guess. What any of the symbols on either arrowhead mean is also anyone’s guess.

These tiny arrowheads often made their way into boots, pant legs, and clothing, or became embedded in animal hides as they rolled in the wet dirt. If the subject would later get sick, the arrowhead was credited with having been discharged from the bow of an elf or a witch.

To be fair to the Celts and Vikings, people of the Middle Ages across the world built legends around prehistoric items, particularly arrowheads, as they had no way of understanding how these came about . . . unless they were magical in some respect.

In 1590, in Scotland, one Katherine Ross, Lady Fowlis (as part of a matrimonial intrigue) was accused of shooting fairy arrows at clay figurines of her enemy. She was tried as a witch and part of the charges read: “In the fyrst, thow art accusit for making of twa pictouris of clay in company with the said Christaine Rois and Marjorie Neyne M’Allester, alias Loskie Loncart . . . Quhilkis twa pictouris, being sett on the north syd of the chalmer, the said Loskie Loncart tuik twa elf arrow heides and delyuerit (delivered them), ane to ye Katherine, and the other, the said Christiane Rois Malcumsone held in her awin hand; and thow schott twa schottis with the said arrow heid att the said Lady Balnagowne (Marjorie Campbell), and Loskie Loncart schott thrie schottis at the said young Laird of Fowlis (Robert Munroe).”



There are many other records of these arrowheads supposedly being used by witches to injure people and cattle, and some witches proclaimed the arrowheads were fashioned by the devil himself, though they may have conveniently had their fingers clamped in a thumbscrew while confessing to it.

One amulet that has gained perhaps the most significant reputation of causing bad luck is the Hope Diamond.

The earliest legend is that the stone was found in India by a Frenchman and sold to the royal family of France, where it was cut a couple of times to enhance its beauty. Eventually, the French blue diamond came up missing. Not long afterwards a blue diamond of similar size, but with a different cut, showed up in England, and this is the diamond named after one of its owners, whose last name was Hope.

There has never been sufficient evidence to prove that the French diamond and the Hope Diamond are one and the same. Regardless, the Hope gem found its way into the hands of another Frenchman by the familiar name of Cartier. The French Cartier jewelers also had a branch office in New York City.

Cartier became the owner of the Hope Diamond and it has been suggested that he began the legend of the Hope Diamond Curse, which wasn't actually first published until the early 20th century.

On January 28, 1911 Cartier sold the stone to Edward B. McLean. In a deal concluded in the offices of the McLean family's *Washington Post* newspaper, Pierre Cartier traded the diamond for \$180,000, about \$4.5 million in today's dollars.

A clause in the sales agreement for the diamond, which was, by then, widely believed to bring death and disaster to its owner, stated: "Should any fatality occur to the family of Edward B. McLean within six months, the said Hope Diamond is agreed to be exchanged for jewelry of equal value."

By March, the diamond had not been paid for in accordance with the terms in the sales



I snapped this photo of the infamous Hope Diamond in the month of May, 2013, while on a visit to the Smithsonian in Washington DC. It was difficult to find an empty spot in the crowd to get this close.

agreement. Cartier hired a lawyer to sue McLean for payment, who responded by saying it was on a loan for inspection. On February 2, 1912 the *New York Times* ran a headline that read –

“Wealthy Purchasers of Famous Stone
to Retain It Despite Sinister Reputation.”

McLean was born into a publishing fortune founded by his paternal grandfather Washington McLean, who owned *The Washington Post* and *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. He was the only child of John Roll McLean, for whom McLean, Virginia is named. McLean is obviously a Scottish name with origins in the western Highlands and Islands.

McLean's wife was Evalyn Walsh, the only daughter of Thomas Walsh, an Irish immigrant miner and prospector turned multimillionaire.

The Hope Diamond was now solidly in the hands of Scottish and Irish bloodlines . . . rich bloodlines at that!

It was during the ownership by the McLeans that the Hope Diamond curse gained its greatest notoriety.

It was Edward and Evalyn's son who first fell victim to the curse, if there ever really was one. The first of the four children born to the McLeans died on May 18, 1919. He was nine-year-old Vinson Walsh McLean (born December 18, 1909) who was struck by a car and killed while crossing Wisconsin Avenue in front of their house.

The McLean family began to suffer further difficulties. On October 9, 1941, their 19-year-old daughter, Evalyn Washington McLean became the fifth wife of 57-year-old Senator Robert Rice Reynolds of North Carolina.

Less than five years later, she was found dead by her mother. A coroner's inquest determined the cause of death to be an accidental overdose of sleeping pills. This younger Evalyn Reynold's daughter, Mamie Spears Reynolds, married Italian race car driver Luigi Chinetti in 1963 and divorced two years later.

The elder couple's second son, Edward Beale McLean, Jr., married Ann Carroll Meem in May 1938. Their divorce was granted in July 1943, and he married a second time in August to actress Gloria Hatrick, with whom he had two sons Ronald and Michael. Ronald died during enemy fire while serving in Vietnam.

McLean Jr. and Gloria divorced in January 1948. In October of that year, he married Manuela "Mollie" Hudson, the former Mrs. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II. In August 1949, ex-wife Gloria Hatrick McLean married actor James Stewart. McLean Jr. and Hudson-Vanderbilt separated in the 1960s and divorced in 1973, after which he married a fourth time, to Patricia Dewey.

Divorce, mental illness, and death plagued the family.

Edward and Evalyn's own marriage ended with much publicized and bitterly contested divorce proceedings, initiated by Mrs. McLean on grounds of infidelity, in October 1931.

Edward McLean filed for divorce in a Mexican court, but his wife obtained a permanent injunction from a District of

Columbia court ordering the cessation of the Mexican proceedings. Edward McLean then suddenly announced he had already married Rose Douras, a sister of Hollywood film star Marion Davies.

A marriage had in fact not occurred, but Edward McLean immediately took up residence in Riga, Latvia, where he again filed for a divorce. It was granted on December 13, 1932.

Edward McLean's increasingly erratic behavior and reckless spending resulted in financial problems that led to the forced sale of *The Washington Post* by trustees appointed by the court. The divorce proceedings of Evalyn McLean continued in United States court but were dropped following an October 31, 1933, verdict by a jury in a Maryland trial that declared Edward McLean to be legally insane and incapable of managing his affairs. The court ordered that he be committed indefinitely to a psychiatric hospital.

Edward McLean died of a heart attack at Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Towson, Maryland, in 1941.

During the divorce proceedings, Evalyn McLean was the victim of fraud associated with the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, perpetrated by con-man Gaston Means. Means duped her into giving him \$100,000, to be used to secure the release of the kidnapped son of Charles Lindbergh. He was eventually charged with fraud and imprisoned.

When Ms. McLean died in 1947, she left the diamond to her grandchildren through a will which insisted that her former property would remain in the custody of trustees until the eldest child had reached 25 years of age. This requirement would have prevented any sale for the next two decades. However, the trustees gained permission to sell her jewels to settle her debts, and in 1949 sold them to New York diamond merchant Harry Winston.

In 1958, Winston donated the Hope Diamond to the Smithsonian, where Specimen #217868 is now said to be insured for \$250 million!

Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright

Cunningham

Few clans of Old Scotland ever established themselves by standing alone against the will of a murderous tyrant, but this band of hearty farmers might well have done just that.

The name Cunningham, which could have signified “courage in battle”, could have come from Cunedda, who was a king of the Gododdin, a regional tribe of Britons known by the Romans as the Votadini. Others claim that in some of the old Celtic tongues, Cunedda was rendered as cinneidigh, meaning “ugly” or “grim-headed” (more directly, the source of the name Kennedy). Over time, the name became associated with the district of Carrick in Ayrshire, Scotland.

Then again, it might be the name’s word-root “cunning” is from the same source as “coney”, or rabbit; this theory is particularly persuasive to many because the coats of arms of the Earls of Glencairn, traditionally the chiefs of the Clan, show two coney (a kind of British hare) as the supporters. It is interesting to note that in Gaelic, the word “coney”, translates as coinean and the name Cunningham translates as Coineagan. Another possible translation is “milk pail”, from the Gaelic word cuineag, marking them as early breeders of what we now call the Ayrshire breed of dairy cattle, distinctive even today for the red-over-white freckling of their short-haired hides.

Despite those meandering paths, though, there’s only the slightest variation in the origins of the famed Cunningham motto, and the prime object on the Chief’s coat of arms.

By far, the most popular and cherished one boasts a taproot to the reign of the historical MacBeth, who, after seizing the throne by killing Duncan, King of Scotland, sent his men to capture Duncan’s escaped heir, Malcolm Canmore. While being thus pursued, young Canmore sought refuge in the barn of a Lowland farmer, a man also named Malcolm, whose father was called Friskin.

Realizing that the Prince was in dire peril if found, the farmer told Canmore to burrow under a pile of loose straw on the barn floor. The farmer then called out to his helpers: “Over, fork over!”, as they hurried to heap more layers of straw over the young fugitive; a single different version says the prince himself ordered the son of Friskin to quickly cover him with more straw, urging the farmer aloud: “Over, fork over!” Either way, when MacBeth’s men stormed into the barn shortly thereafter, they demanded of the farmer whether he had seen any evidence of the fugitive they sought; at dire risk to his own life, Malcolm, son of Friskin, dared to reply that No, he had not seen the man they were hunting.



Cunningham Tartan and Shield



the image of a shake fork, and that his family line's motto would eternally declare: "Over, Fork Over", so that none might ever forget the family's courage and loyalty to those they considered to be the 'True Kings of Scotland'. If there was also a significance to the Clan's choice of a unicorn's head to appear beneath that motto on their new crest, that tale is one now lost to time.

In the 12th century, Hugh de Moreville, the Constable of Scotland, granted most of the parish

After several more tense moments of stomping and thrashing about, the search party decided to believe the farmer's words, and so galloped away to seek their quarry elsewhere . . . and thus was the prince's life and liberty saved, enabling him to flee again, and plan for a stronger day.

For many years afterward, the ruling despot called MacBeth sought to absolve the cloud of regicide from over his name, building abbeys and schools, hosting foreign nobility, opening his coffers to clergy, dignitaries and churchmen of all rank, even traveling to Rome to curry the favor of the Pope, but ultimately the day came when MacBeth was challenged for his very throne, and slain, and the estranged royal known as Canmore forever avenged the name of Duncan, claiming the crown of the Scots for himself as Malcolm III.

Remembering the heroism of that Lowland farmer, the new King summoned him to court, and proclaimed that Henceforth, Malcolm, son of Friskin, would be Master of the King's Stables, and be known thereafter as the Thane of Cunninghame, and that his new arms would bear

of Kilmaurs to his most loyal warrior, Warnebald of Cunningham, who went on to become the founder of the Earls of Glencairn. Several generations later, Hervey de Cunningham of Kilmaurs fought alongside the Laird of Boyd against the invading forces of King of Norway at the Battle of Largs in 1263, and for that bravery, his possession of Kilmaurs in its entirety was confirmed by Alexander II.

Despite being bound by marriage and descent, from early times, to the Clan Comyn, when the Comyn's royal aspirations were overthrown by the Bruce, the Cunninghams renounced their association, and sided with the Bruces, yet still kept the shake fork on their arms, if, arguably, for no other reason, as an homage to the crop-raising origins which they shared with their former allies.

Shake forks (which can be identified by having only two tines) were used to heave around corn and pasture silage for drying-out and storage, as well as for chaffing straw and hay, ample evidence of the Cunninghams having been primarily grain and dairy farmers for several centuries. When depicted in heraldry, it

is simplified into a bold, geometric “Y” shape.

In recognition of their fealty, Robert the Bruce awarded the Clan further lands in 1319, including the holding known as Lamburgton; in 1354, through the marriage of their chief, Sir William Cunningham the Younger to Margaret, daughter of Sir Robert Dennieston, the Cunninghams increased their possessions further to include Glencairn. His grandson, Sir Alexander de Cunningham, was created Lord Kilmaurs in 1462, then Earl of Glencairn, in 1488, by James III, though he was slain alongside his King at the Battle of Sauchieburn that very year.

William, the 3rd Earl, was captured at Solway Moss, but released in exchange for pledging to support the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to King Edward VI of England. Despite that concession, Alexander, the 5th Earl of Glencairn, became a vehement supporter of the Reformation, having been a frequent protégé of the fiery crusader John Knox, and was reported to have been personally responsible for the desecration, vandalism, and virtual destruction of Mary’s personal chapel at Holyrood, after her removal to Loch Leven.

Like father, like son: the 6th Earl’s equally hostile Protestant passions served to accelerate a centuries-old feud between the Cunninghams and the devoutly Catholic neighbors, the Montgomery Earls of Eglinton, culminating in the murder of Lord Eglinton, and leading to enraged Montgomery chieftains mounting raids of retribution deep into Cunningham territories.

Concurrently, due to the Flight of the Irish Earls, Sir James Cunningham, the 5th Earl’s third cousin and son-in-law, was granted over a thousand acres for settlement in County Donegal, by the English Crown Court, in order to spearhead the “plantation” (relocation) of vacated Scottish landholders in Northern Ireland.

The Cunningham’s Protestant fervor notwithstanding, another William, this one the

9th Earl of Glencairn, returned to the side of the Stewart monarchs, leading the great uprising of 1653 for Charles II. Having wrested control of the city of Elgin the following year, he felt emboldened enough to announce his intention to raise a larger army, on behalf of his King, and therewith march against the dastardly English enforcer, Oliver Cromwell.

The rebellion collapsed in defeat, but William’s deeds were well remembered, and he was made Lord Chancellor after the Restoration in 1660.

In the 18th century, Alexander Cunningham, and Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, were both widely known as personal friends of Robert Burns; Alan Cunningham, born at Blackwood in 1784, was a well-regarded poet and writer of his times, his work promoted and often sponsored by Sir Walter Scott, who provided support for the author’s two sons after their father’s death in 1828.

Among the Clan’s important cadet branches are Auchinharvie, Caprington, Corsehill, Craighends and Robertland; although they no longer sit on the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs, Cunningham is still among the more commonly encountered surnames in Ulster and southeastern Scotland, and in the U.S., families named Cunningham can be met everywhere, often proving themselves perfect examples of the proud American Middle Class - just ask Ron Howard!

This material is just a sampling of one of the 60 clan names and legends appearing in the upcoming book -

Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright

Follow future issues of Celtic Guide for further information about publication details. . . . and thank you for joining us at the hearth ! - DW

PART ONE

by Piotr Kronenberger

THE OTHER SIDE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Piotr or Peter Kronenberger comes to us from, of all places, Poland! He has studied the Eastern European origins of at least some Celtic tribes and has been a student of this race for most of his life. His perspective is unique and we are happy to present the first of several columns he will provide to the Celtic Guide over the next few months.

I've been fascinated by the Celts for years – by their personalities, as varied and colorful as the clothing they wore, and of the gods which they worshiped. Their history and myths captivated me from the start, just like their craftsmanship, piety, inward and outward strength and mobility.

However, as the saying goes – there are two sides to every story. My spiritual brothers (as I like to call them) are no exception here.

In keeping with the July theme of 'Villains' I would like to tell you a bit about the "dark side" of Celtic culture – things often controversial, but nonetheless interesting in their own right.

If we were to analyze this subject from today's technologically advanced and "enlightened" perspective, you could say that the ancient Celts were a people equally strange and fascinating.

They loved feasts in the company of friends and family, placing them on par with the art of war. Conflicts with neighboring tribes were for them – among other things – a chance for wealth and social advancement, an opportunity for

even the lowliest slave. During raids, it was not uncommon for the attackers to 'take advantage' of the enemy's women.

In times of peace, the average Celtic farmer, grateful for a plentiful harvest, offered up the first fruits of that harvest to Amaethon, the god of agriculture. With an upcoming battle on the horizon, that same farmer could have easily given his own blood as a sacrifice to the warrior-goddess Morrigan, or Agrona: the goddess of slaughter.

Smaller sacrifices like those mentioned above could be conducted by anyone. Bigger rituals involving the tribe as a whole, or associated with the most important feasts, were the sole domain of the Druids.

The Celts conducted sacrificial rites from time immemorial. The general division looked like this: gods watched over the tribes, while goddesses took care of certain places (although this wasn't a strict rule). In order for a battle to begin in such a place, a sacrifice had to be offered up to appease the goddess dwelling there. A symbolic union was forged between the patron of a tribe and the goddess of a place.

In the beginning, this was done using mainly animals. A particular sacrifice varied in size depending on its intention and the god in question. Over time, such practices became increasingly drastic. Celtic deities started craving human blood, all the more so as the Roman Empire, and other barbaric peoples, grew in strength.

If you were a Celt offering up a sacrifice, you would most likely do it in a forest, on a beach or at a body of water (i.e. rivers, lakes). Those kinds of places were holy – the border-zones between our plane of existence and the Otherworld.



The idea of BALANCE (be it unity between the members of a tribe or, on a larger scale: between this world and the next) was of vital importance to the Celtic priests. And, they stopped at nothing to maintain that balance.

The Greek historian Herodotus, who first wrote that “the Danube rises in the land of the Celts” gives us an interesting example here.

Under the guidance of the Druids, members of a certain tribe living on the banks of the Danube gathered at a local grove. Even the children were present. Today, one of the tribesmen was to be sentenced for a crime he committed: murder. A stone table stood in the middle of the grove. It was there that the criminal would pay the highest price. I do not remember at this point whose life this Celt had on his hands, but it must have been someone influential if blood cried for blood.

Not everything went according to plan, though. The convict managed to escape before his sentence could be carried out. Such a turn of events angered the Powers Above. No sacrifice

meant that the soul of the murdered Celt would not cross over into eternity. It was stranded on this side, thus upsetting the delicate balance of things. Could anything be done to fix this situation?

From somewhere within the crowd gathered at the grove, a man’s voice suddenly called out. In order to restore the balance between the gods and the tribe (and also to ensure eternal peace for his kinsman’s soul) this man willingly offers to replace the escaped convict.

The Celt had done nothing wrong, yet he freely gave himself over to the Druids. It was nothing personal – one life had to be given for one which was taken. The ritual was completed and the Universe set right once more.

It is likely ceremonies such as this one were also conducted in other places that my brothers inhabited.

But what became of the Celt who managed to “cheat Death”? In my opinion, it would have been better for him if he had just let the priests do their thing.

The villain would now find no peace under the vast open sky which for him resembled a great and watchful eye, the eye of the gods tracking his every move.

For until his last day on this earth, there would always be in the back of this warrior’s mind a certain subconscious fear. A fear shared by every Celt from the Balkans to Ireland. It was the only nightmare of a people who otherwise feared nothing in this world or the next.

The Celts – wildly brave, impertinent, proud, fierce fighters – were mortified by the possibility that the sky could fall on their heads!

To Be Continued...

Gwenllian ferch Llywelyn

by Jemmy Farmer

One of the stories I remember from my childhood is that of *Gwenllian ferch Llywelyn*, daughter of *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, the last *Tywysog Cymru* (Prince of Wales). *Gwenllian*, therefore is the last native Princess of Wales. She is not the villain of this story, the English King Edward I is, and this is her story in the Welsh poetic form, *awdl gwydd*.

A royal daughter was born
Amid mourning tears of grief
A mother dying giving birth
No mirth for the princely chief.

From England a king made war
Before a babe knew her name
Her father slain, the child gone
Alone, lost to a king's claim.

Imprisoned behind the high wall
And that is all she would know
For life she was never free
Never to see Cymru glow.

Kept by nuns who held her fate
A King's weight measured by fear
Never hearing native tongue
The songs unsung, year on year

Fifty four years, 'tis no lie
Captive to die without fame
A princess of ancient time
A crime: but I know your name.

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Gwenllian Memorial, Sempringham, England

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though Jemmy Farmer comes to us from England, her heart is in Wales. She has a long list of online writings, links to which can be found below.

In September, the Celtic Guide will depart from its norm of non-fiction narrative, to include a wide variety of creative offerings under the theme of 'The Muse.'

Jemmy's poem is an example of what you might find there. Be sure to catch that special issue of the Celtic Guide.

Jemmy Farmer

Jemmy is freelance writer and poet. She started writing after raising her two boys as a way of discovering just who Jemmy is. She is a neo-formalist poet preferring to write in meter and form rather than free verse, but as she journeys on in her hobbit hole she is beginning to learn to relax and let the feel and sound of words take over, rather than be dictated to by rigid rules and structure. However she will still argue that a sonnet without consistent iambic meter *ain't* a sonnet and Lewis Turco's *Book of Form* is never far from her side.

Jemmy was a moderator and contributor to the poetic forum *Tir na nog*, and is co-founder of Sapphic Poets, a forum for poets, writers and artists who yearn to share the beauty of femininity. She is also the author of two chapbooks and an anthology of poems. She is currently working on her second collection and on a collaborative collection with her fellow poet and partner, Roxi St Clair. See more of Jemmy's work at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/PoetJemmy-Farmer/238992992813885>

<http://poemaday2013.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/Jemmy>

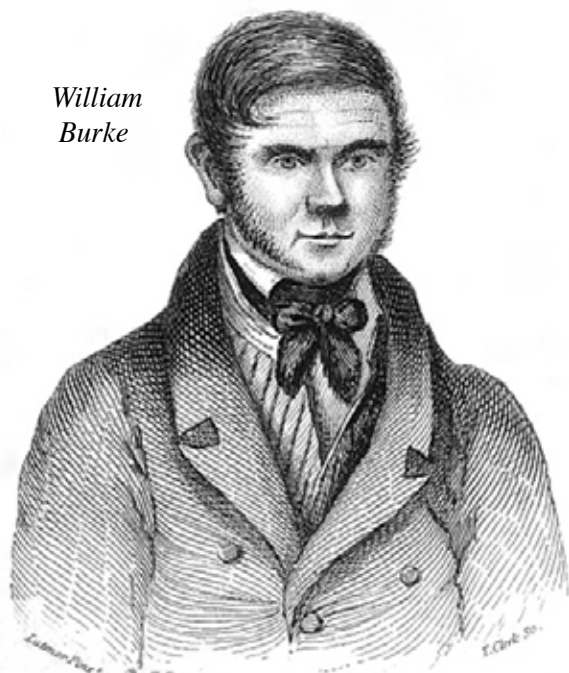
The Body Snatchers

by Victoria Roberts

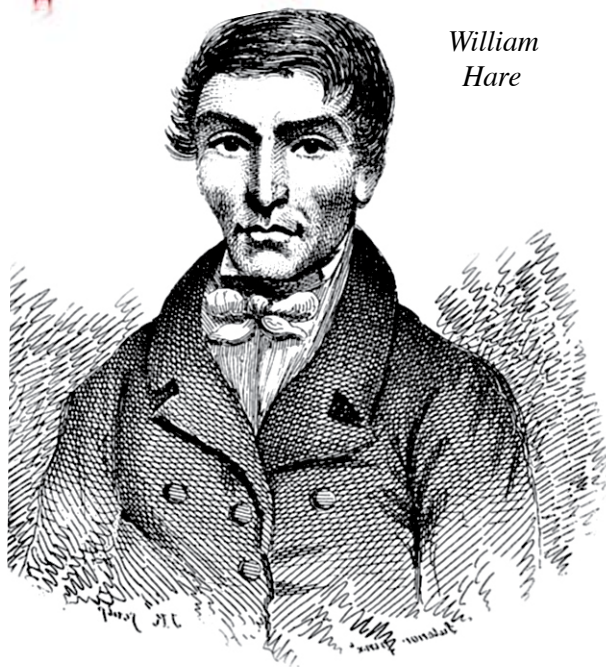
Throughout the centuries there have been men and women who were branded as villains—some of them rightfully so. Every country has certainly had their fair share of bad boys and Scotland is no exception.

William Burke and William Hare were Irish immigrants who arrived in Scotland around the early 1800's. The men first met when they came to Edinburgh around 1827. During those times, there was not a sufficient supply of cadavers that were readily available for scientific study. Basically, there was an issue with supply and demand. The bodies of executed criminals were the main supply source for medical research, but the number of executions was diminishing during the early nineteenth century. Doctors relied heavily on anatomical dissection in order to teach their students; therefore, some physicians resorted to relying on “body snatchers” to fill the void.

*William
Burke*



*William
Hare*



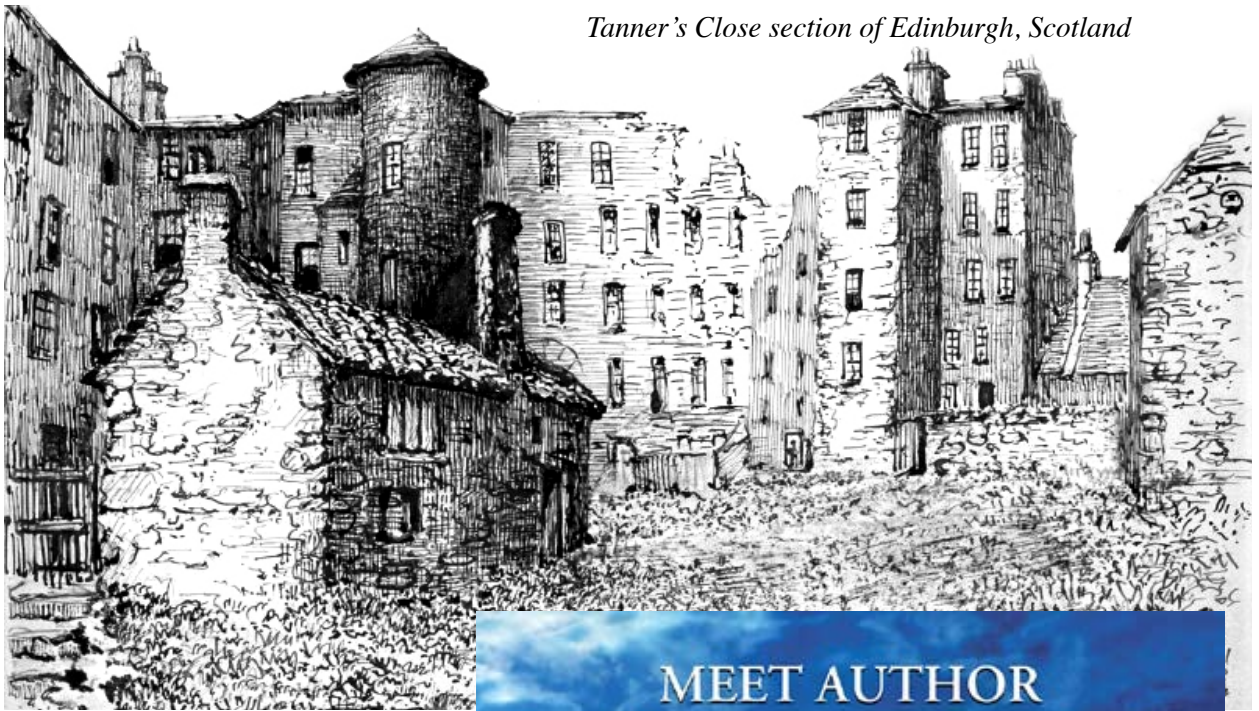
Burke and Hare moved into Tanner's Close and became friends. Hare's wife ran a boarding house and that's where the two started their machinations. The first body they sold was actually a tenant who died of natural causes. When the man passed away, he still owed rent money to Hare.

Do you see where this is going?

In order to recoup the money owed to him, Hare filled the coffin with bark and took the body to Edinburgh University where he looked for a potential buyer. Low and behold, Hare supposedly sold the body to an assistant of Dr. Robert Knox. Knox was a lecturer who charged fees to his students and to anyone who attended his lectures on anatomy.

Realizing the death of the tenant was easy money, Burke and Hare decided murder was the way to go. Their first intentional victim was a

Tanner's Close section of Edinburgh, Scotland



sick tenant who they soused with whisky and then suffocated. When there were no other “ill” tenants to be found, they lured men and women in from the street.

During their murderous spree, Burke and Hare were responsible for the killing of sixteen people (or more) over the course of ten months. The two men were eventually caught when the Edinburgh newspaper started reported people missing.

This is the part that sounds like an old Alfred Hitchcock movie.

Hare was granted immunity by turning king’s evidence aka state’s evidence by testifying against Burke. Burke was sentenced to death by hanging. On the following day, Burke was publicly dissected. Police had to be called when a minor riot broke out because there were a limited number of tickets sold for the event.

Alfred Hitchcock, indeed!

MEET AUTHOR
VICTORIA ROBERTS

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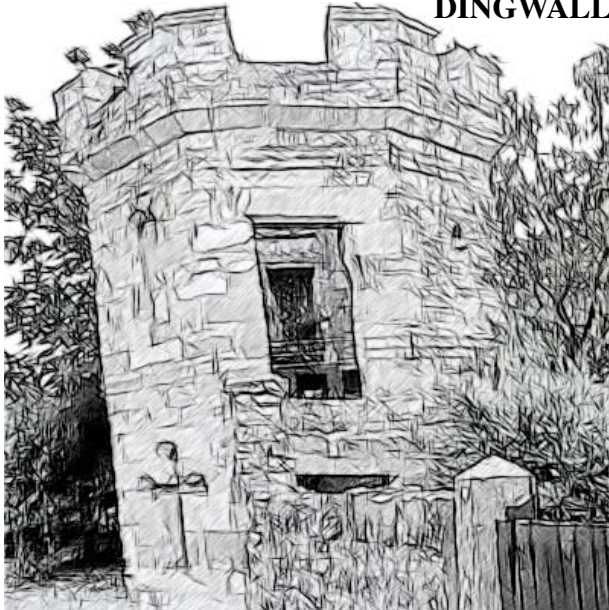
Treachery in the Isles

The legacy of the great Somerled, Gaelic Thane of the Isles, filtered its way down over several generations to one Alexander MacDonald, third “Lord” of the Isles, first Clan Donald Earl of Ross, and Justiciar (judge or sheriff) of the Highlands – the greater geographic portion of Scotland.

Alexander’s son, John, is considered the fourth and last official Lord of the Isles from the original Somerled dynasty. He is generally considered a weak leader, although it may just be the odds were stacked against him with his own son opposing him, coupled with the Scottish King James and his ‘Daunting of the Isles’.

Whatever the case, John first forfeited his Earldom of Ross title and eventually his Lord of the Isles title, the latter in 1493. For the most part, leadership of the Isles fell on the shoulders of his brother Uisdean (Ooshdn), or Hugh of Sleat – Sleat being a peninsula on the Isle of Skye. The seat of the clan moved from its dual headquarters on the island of Islay and also Dingwall Castle in the shire of Ross, to the Isle of Skye and Dunscaith Castle.

DINGWALL



Alexander’s father, Donald of Harlaw, had captured Dingwall Castle in 1411. The castle was located in the town of Dingwall north of Inverness. In the early Middle Ages Dingwall was reputed to have the largest castle north of Stirling. Macbeth was born at Dingwall about 1005 A.D. All that is now left of that castle is a single tower rebuilt from the destroyed ruins.

Uisdean was born at Dingwall around 1436. His brother gave the Sleat peninsula of Skye to Uisdean and he chose the old castle of Dunscaith as his headquarters. This castle figures in very ancient Irish mythology. It was here that Chu Chulainn is said to have learned the art of war from the warrior queen Scathach. The nearby Coolin Mountains are named for him.

DUNSCAITH



Earlier, during his youth, Uisdean’s father Alexander found himself in Edinburgh in the company of the Earl of Orkney. Drinking late into the evening and verbally taunting each other, the two powerful men left the scene vowing to be the first to serve breakfast to the other the following morning.

The earl had his men confiscate or guard every conceivable bit of food or beverage that could be gathered during the night. However, one of MacDonald’s men was able to shoot a deer and Alexander was first to serve breakfast to the earl. (I suppose you could call this the first McDonald’s breakfast meal.)

The Earl of Orkney was furious and threatened MacDonald, who in turn stated that he had a young lad at home that could whip the earl. That young lad was Uisdean, and a few years later, in 1460, at the age of about 24, Uisdean did just that by attacking Orkney with other “gentlemen of the Isles”.

After his victory at Orkney, Uisdean made for the Caithness region of Northeast Scotland, just across a short span of water from the Orkneys. There he met up with George Gunn, Crowner or Coroner of Caithness. It may be that he was there to find remission for his attack. Some say Uisdean killed the earl, while others say he only defeated him in battle.

Back then a crowner or corner had a slightly different role than what we think of today. In fact, the position was created to make sure the king got his share of any wealth left over when a person died. Typically, when one would receive remission they would pay a fee to the coroner (most of which went to the king), and

then they would be stripped of all but a simple monk type outfit and be sent on foot away from the village.

Uisdean seems much luckier. He in fact had a tryst with George Gunn’s daughter, despite the fact that he already had a baby son by his wife, back home on Skye. Uisdean seems to have been quite the rogue in that he is reported to have had six sons by six different women.

In the aftermath of the downfall of the Lordship, all six sons appear to have died violent deaths. The first son, John (named for his uncle, last Lord of the Isles), relinquished Dunscaith Castle about the time of the ‘daunting’ and he appears to have died around that same time. Although there is no record of the manner of his death, it is most likely that he died in battle or through treachery, as this was a very violent period in Skye history. The second son, Donald of the Caithness Gunns, or Donald Gallach, inherited Dunscaith by force, along with the title Chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat (Skye).



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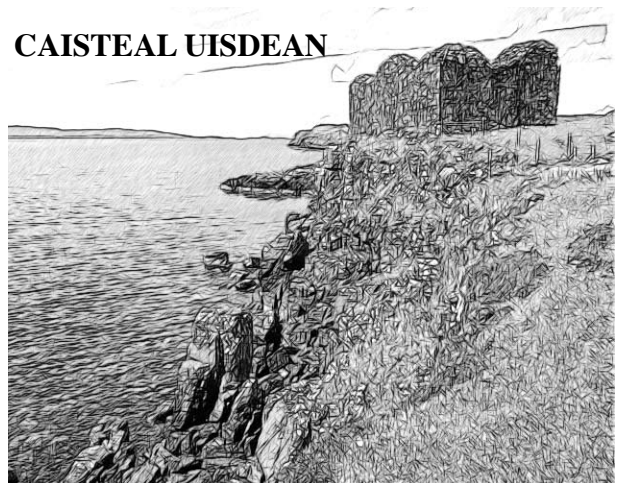
The most villainous of all the half brothers was named Archibald. He went to visit his half-brother Donald to view a galley the clan chief had just had built. He pointed out a pretended flaw in the hull and as Donald bent over to inspect the bottom of the boat, Archibald killed him with a dagger.

Archibald joined with various other half-brothers until all but he were systematically killed, leaving him as captain of the clan. He adopted the sons of Donald Gallach and another half-brother. Years later, when the three were out hunting, the two cousins took revenge on their dastardly uncle, repaying him with a dagger to his own heart.

This left Donald, son of Donald Gallach, in charge of the clan. The next handful of clan leaders carried the name Donald, which became somewhat of a title as well as a first name. Also, a new Uisdean came upon the scene, a couple generations down the road. He was a cousin to the reigning Donald of the time.

In 1601, this second, younger Uisdean built the last castle to be built on the Isle of Skye and named it for himself – Caisteal Uisdean.

CAISTEAL UISDEAN



Uisdean was envious of Chief Donald and so he hatched a plan to do away with the clan leader by inviting him to see the new castle, and there ambushing him and claiming leadership of the MacDonalds.

He made one grave mistake, though.

THE WAIT IS OVER

SCOTLAND'S MIGHTY MEN OF OLD IS NOW IN PRINT

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Uisdean sent an invitation letter to Donald, while at the same time sending a letter to the Martin family who lived just above the castle asking their help in the ambush. As fate would have it, the letters were accidentally switched. When the Martins came to tell him they received the wrong letter, this younger Uisdean knew it wouldn't be long before his cousin Donald came looking for him.

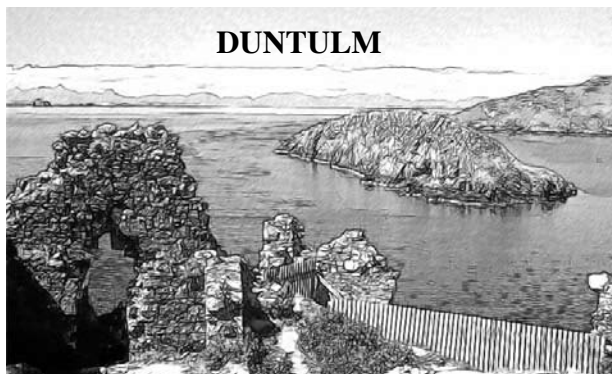
Uisdean escaped to the island of North Uist and took refuge in an old stone ruins built in the middle of a lake, with a causeway that was only passable at certain times of the day.

Soon, Donald's men found the hideout and watched long enough to see the causeway revealed. Then they attacked. Uisdean, in a silly attempt to escape, dressed as a woman. He was said to be a tall man, which made his disguise even more ridiculous. The story goes that one of Donald's men, who suspected the old woman he was looking at was really Uisdean, threw a loaf of bread to him. It was customary for women of the time to catch loaves of bread in their apron, however, Uisdean gave himself away by catching the bread with his hands. It was the last bread he would hold in those hands.



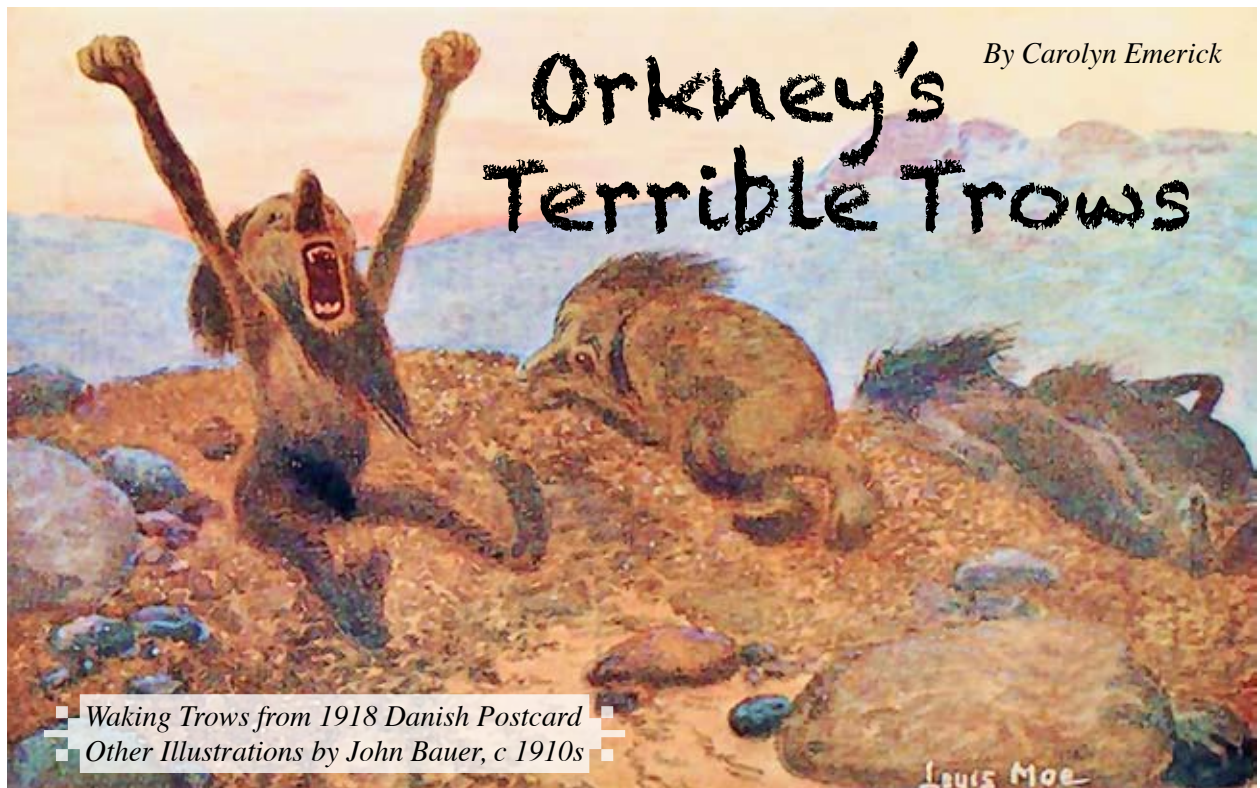
Celtic Guide publisher Jim McQuiston (at right) meets with Ian Martin, on the Isle of Skye. Martin's family still owns the farm above Caisteal Uisdean after more than 400 years! Ian repeated the Uisdean story as if it happened just yesterday and stated that he never thought he'd meet someone from the MacUisdean family, just as I never thought I'd meet someone from the Martin family that was involved in this story. The legends of Scotland are real and they live on in the hearts and minds of us all, even after all these years.

Donald had Uisdean taken to the dungeon at Duntulm Castle, on Skye, where he was given a plate of salty beef and an empty water jug. There he died an agonizing death.



With their dynasty and wealth gone it is understandable that these men, who knew not much beyond warfare and raids and domination of neighboring clans, would resort to infighting over the last few morsels fate had allowed them. As their fortunes waned under the ambitions of the Cambells, and the thumb of the Scottish king, the old Lord of the Isle dynasty crumbled along with all of the castles mentioned in this story. It was a very bloody and treacherous end to what was once the largest, most powerful clan in all the land.

Today, there is a very strong resurgence of Clan Donald, along with an overall Chief of Clan Donald, and a separate Chief of Sleat. There are likely to be millions of people with a wee bit 'o the blood of Somerled, and the blood of Clan Donald in their veins, and some who still proudly say, "The Blood is Strong, The Heart is Highland."



Trows are fascinating creatures found only in the folklore of the Orkney and Shetland islands. Yet, describing them accurately is difficult because sources are not always clear.

Folklorists have long insisted that the word “trow” is a corruption of “troll,” and that Orkney’s Trows descend from their Viking ancestors’ stories of Trolls. Sigurd Towrie, author of the comprehensive website covering all things Orkney (Orkneyjar.com), disagrees with this assessment. He believes there may be a connection with a different creature from Norse mythology, the Draugr. This connection stems from both creatures’ affiliation with burial mounds. The Draugr were undead tomb guardians who harassed any trespassers, whether human or animal, who dared to come too close to his mound. In Orkney folklore, Trows also had an association with mounds. Further, “trow” is pronounced to rhyme with “cow.” Towrie believes “trow” evolved from a now extinct Orcadian word “drow” (also rhymes with cow) which relates to Draugr.

It gets more confusing still!

Apparently, Orkney mythology merges Fairies and Trows, making it unclear if they are the same species, or if they were once separate creatures that merged over hundreds of years of storytelling. Sometimes the words are used interchangeably.

In his book of Orkney folk tales, storyteller Tom Muir admits that even he can’t suss it out. He says “In Orkney the word [Trow] has been mixed up with the fairy, so it is hard to say if we are dealing with one or more type of creature. In the text of this book I have used the name given by the person who told the story” (Muir, xi).

This highlights the huge discrepancy between contemporary and previous conceptions of Fairies. Most people today would not identify a “trollish” creature as either a fairy or a hideous undead grave-haunting monster! Our cultural conception of fairies does not overlap with, say... zombies for example. Supernatural creatures of yester yore have often survived in the contemporary consciousness as either benevolent or malicious with no grey area in between. This is likely due to Christianization.

Pre-Christian European supernatural beings ranged on a continuum with varying levels of benevolence or malevolence toward humans. Often the level of kindness or helpfulness of the spirit to the human depended on the human's actions toward the spirit world and/or nature. A human who transgressed upon nature in a way that was deemed disrespectful would incur the ire of the protective spirits of that place. However, with Christianization came the new concept of polarity. Rather than a continuum, wherein both humans and spirits could range from various levels of good and bad, the new worldview was black and white; angels being good, demons being bad. If one reads enough post-conversion folklore, we find that Christian imagery is often laid down directly over pre-Christian myth. Therefore, we find that trolls, giants, elves, and all manner of supernatural creatures are equated with demons and frightened off by scripture, the sign of the cross, the presence of a Bible, etc. The problem is that the original context of these legends becomes blurred.

So, where a contemporary person sees fairies as angelic figures and trolls as demonic, our ancestors had a completely different conception. In no other place is this highlighted as much, that I have yet seen, as in the Orcadian Trow.

Physical descriptions of Trows vary. They could range in size from very small to quite large. On average, Trows were diminutive in stature, standing perhaps four foot tall. Like Trolls, they were known to be very ugly and covered in hair.

Trows wreaked all manner of havoc on humans, and could be responsible for taking the lives of children, women in childbirth, and entire herds of livestock. The term "elf-shot" was used by Anglo-Saxons on the British mainland to refer to an illness that could not be explained. It was assumed that whoever fell ill had been shot with an Elf's arrow. Strangely enough, the same term was used in Orkney. However, in Orkney the Trows were the culprits shooting the Elf arrows.



Trows were also blamed for the folkloric phenomena known as "changelings." The Orkney versions are similar to changeling stories found all around Europe, the only difference being that the Trows were the culprits instead of Fairies or Elves. A Changeling was often a sickly infant or child. Conditions that were not medically understood such as Down's Syndrome or mental retardation could be attributed to the child being a Changeling.

The idea was that the real child, the healthy one, had been kidnapped by Trows who left their own sickly child in its place. Sometimes adults could be Changelings as well.





A woman who died in childbirth might have been taken by the Trows and replaced with an enchanted block of wood that resembled her. Elderly folks afflicted with dementia were also said to be the victims of Trowie magic. An old man or woman with Alzheimer's disease was said to be taken into the mound with the Trows.

Yet, they also engaged in activities shared by more fanciful creatures known to the folklore of

nearby cultures. Like Irish Leprechauns, Trows were known to have a passion for music. Stories are told of Orcadian musicians being whisked away to play their music for the Trows in the mounds. Often these musicians returned with strange new melodies that were enchanting and otherworldly to the human ear.

But, sometimes, these musicians could be caught up in the dancing and revelry of the Trowie world.



What seemed like a few hours in Trow-land translated into many years when they returned to the human world. Sometimes the unfortunate musician might return to find nearly all his friends and family had grown old or passed away, while he had not aged one day.

In some cases, Trows could be helpful. There are stories of Trows kept as farmhands. However, the farmer would have to keep a close watch that his Trowie helpers got up to no mischief! In stories depicting this scenario, the farmer would round up the Trows and lock them up at the end of the day lest they cause trouble in the night.

Ernest W. Marwick was a leading scholar and author on Orkney folklore. He wrote, quite literally, the definitive works on Orkney. His *An Orkney Folklore* was released in two volumes and encompasses only a selection of his full writings on Orkney. Marwick asserts that Trows do, indeed, stem from Norse Trolls. Marwick believes that the immensely sized Trolls and Giants of Norse lore were scaled down to fit within the confines of the island community. In other words, the Troll evolved into the Trow due to his new environment. What is interesting is that the Trow then split into two distinct subspecies: the land Trows and the water Trows.

According to legend, both species were originally one. At some point in time there was a civil war between two factions. The losing side was banished from land and forced to make a new life in the sea, resulting in a new race of Sea Trows.

After reading Marwick's writings in addition to Sigurd Towrie's, my own conclusion is that they both must be correct. There are certainly elements of the Troll and the Draugr in the Orkney Trow; as well as the Fairy, the Elf, the Leprechaun, the Giant, and probably other fairytale creatures. Perhaps Marwick's theory that the island environment was too limited in space for large scale creatures of legend to survive in the imagination of the islanders is correct. With less land mass, perhaps the local folklore could not make sense of the plethora of fairytale creatures that existed in the wide spaces and diverse topography of larger environments. So, maybe the many legendary creatures of their ancestors were merged into the singular creature the Orcadians call the Trow.

Whatever the case, Orkney folklore abounds in Trowie tales. In time, I hope to share more with you. So, stayed tuned for more adventures through Orcadian folklore in future issues of Celtic Guide.

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Villains and Victims

by James McQuiston

The witch, throughout history, has been painted as a villainous character, except perhaps the Good Witch of the North, in the Wizard of Oz. However, a thorough look at witch trials, especially in Scotland from the early 1500s to the middle 1700s, shows that the real villains seem to be government officials, church officials, and, yes, those out to make a buck on another person's misery. The witch burning craze had already made its way through Europe where hundreds of thousands of people were accused and most often burned alive, by the time it hit Scotland and hit it hard. At least in Scotland the typical death was to be strangled to death first and then burned.

In researching this subject it is more than obvious that those who carried out these trials were driven by the quest for power, religious zeal, peer pressure and SURPRISE the profit motive.

Everyone got paid - the man who provided the coal or the barrel, the men who built the gallows, the men who did the strangling (including beer and whiskey money for the executioner), the judges, the officers of the court, the jailers . . . the list goes on and on of people who were paid money to aid and abet the torture and killing of often aged, infirm women, and occasionally a man thrown in for good measure.

And even the accusers, the obviously innocent, and the elite weren't safe. The mid 1600s, in Germany, saw three church canons, fourteen assistant clergy, the widow of a chancellor, several city councilman, and even several children between the ages of nine and twelve sometimes mercifully beheaded, but mostly burned alive.

Belief in this type of thing goes way back in history but seems to have accelerated with the Catholic Inquisition. However, even Martin Luther was a big believer in witches, and in Scotland it was the Presbyterians, along with a little help from the Catholics and Episcopalians.

It wasn't so much what church you belonged to as how collectively ignorant your particular corner of the world was.

One very surprising Scot to be accused was John Knox, the man most responsible for establishing Presbyterianism in Scotland. He had married a 15 year old girl while he was age 60. The girl was Margaret Stewart, daughter of Andrew, Lord, Ochiltree. Knox was charged with using "love philters" to win Margaret's affection. The situation was described by a secular priest, Nicol Burne, as "ane damosel of nobil blud, and he ane auld decrepit creatur of masist bais degrie of onie that could be found in the countrey."

Of course it was the rival Catholics who were accusing one of their greatest persecutors, the Presbyterian John Knox, of this evil.

It went even further, though. Knox, the great 'reformer', was accused of having attempted to raise up some spirits in the kirkyard of St. Andrew's and it was said that while in the midst of his incantations he raised "cold Nick" (the devil himself), with a great pair of horns on his head, a sight so terrible that Knox's secretary was reported to have died from fright.

*John Knox,
witch hunter
and accused
witch, himself*



John Knox was powerful enough to avoid prosecution but thousands of others were not so lucky. The estimates of the number of Scottish people accused of witchery in this roughly 200 year period (1510 to 1727) range from 1700 to 17,000, but some experts pinpoint the figure at around 5,000 based on actual records.

It was in 1510 when a dictum was issued at a judicial hearing in Jedburgh, Scotland, located just 10 miles from the English border. This town was significant in Scottish history. The greatly religious King Malcolm IV died at Jedburgh in 1165. Mary Queen of Scots stayed at a home there, which is now a museum, and Prince Charlie stayed in the town on his way to attempt an invasion of England. The town was a place where negotiations between Scotland and England often took place.

The dictum asked that there be an inquiry as to whether “thair be ony Wichecraft or Sossary wyst in the realme.”

The town was well-known for quick and sometimes harsh judgement. The expression “Jeddart justice” or “Jethart Justice”, where a man was hanged first and tried afterward, seems to have arisen from one case of summary execution of a gang of villains at Jedburgh.

In 1282 a priest in Fife was charged with sorcery. In 1479 the Earl of Mar and several acquaintances were charged and executed as witches, warlocks and sorcerers. Though there were earlier accusations and convictions of witches in Scotland, this 1510 decree at Jedburgh seems to have fueled a witch hunting mania throughout the ‘realme’ that left even the rich and powerful at risk . . . and didn’t end until 1727.

For example, in 1537, Lady Jane Douglas, sister of the Earl of Angus, and widow of John, Lord Glamis, together with her second husband, her son, and the local priest were charged and summarily executed – a political persecution.

Often politics were involved, often the profit motive was involved, most often those poor souls being tortured said whatever they could to stop the pain.

How bad was that torture?

On January 20, 1629 there was a complaint to the Privy Council by John Trinch against Duncan Kendla and others for assault on his mother, the late Marion Hardie, confined in the pit of Eyemouth on a charge of witchcraft. In his complaint he says the accused went to the pit and without warrant, the torturers –

“aganis the compleanor, putt violent hands on her persoun, band her armes with towes, and so threw the same about that they disjoynted and mutilat both her armes, and made the sinewes to loupe asunder, and thairafter with thair haille force drew ane great tow about her waist, kuist her on her backe and with thair knees they birsed, bruised, and punsed her so that she wes not able to stirre, strake the heid of ane speir throw her left foote, to the effusioun of her blood in great quantitie and perrel of her lyffe, wherethrow she lay bedfast in great pane and dolour a long tyme thairafter.” - *Registry of the Privy Council, 2. series, volume 3, pages 41-42.*

Marion Hardie, an unconvicted victim of villainous torturers, died of this massive trauma. She wasn’t alone in her suffering. Most of the accused were tortured long before they were convicted, and in their pain they confessed to crimes never committed, they accused others to relieve their own pain, and some even sought death as a relief from it all.

In April of 1632 Janet Love filed a complaint against a sheriff substitute in Renfrewshire and a local minister, John Hamiltoun, saying they - “caused tortour (to) the complainer with bow strings, stob her with preins, lay her in the stockes, call wedges on her schinnes, and other wayes most miserablie intreate her.”

Janet was set free on bail of 500 merks to stand trial at a later date. What her ultimate fate was is anyone’s guess. She was just a number in the vast effort to convict at all cost.

Some accusations were made for political reasons, some in religious fervor, but it does appear that money had a lot to do with the phenomenon. In several cases, a long list of those who were paid for their services was issued. One such case shows payment to the person given the

commission to burn the witches, to the person setting up the gallows, to the clerk of the witch proceedings, two days wages for the executioner, to someone who supplied a quart of oil for the burning, to another for three loads of coal, and to another for providing heather, to a man acting as prosecutor during the trial, for three “faldome towis to bind the witches hands”, for “four faldome gritt towis to kitt them all up with”, for three tar barrels, for the hangman’s wages, for his son for being the one to pronounce judgement, “for an instrument upon Isobell Grahame’s confession aganes the rest of the witches”, to a man who “furnished” the witches, for the man who furnished the executioner and his son, for someone to bring bread and drink to the accusers, and for someone to bring the same to the hangman and, surprisingly even to the witches, apparently for their *last meal*.

Keep in mind - this was only ONE witch trial. Multiple this by 5000 trials plus or minus.

There were those who spoke out against the proceedings. Reverend John Brown was born at Carpow in the parish of Abernethy, in Perthshire, Scotland. He was ordained as a minister at Haddington, East Lothian, on 4 July 1751. In 1769 he published *The Dictionary of the Bible*.

In his book, though he rails to some degree against witchcraft, he mentions that “great caution is necessary in detecting and punishing the guilty lest the innocent suffer, as many instances in New England and other places show.”

Alas, even poor John Brown was accused of witchcraft. He had, on his own, learned a number of languages. He was accused by his neighbors of gaining this knowledge from the devil and being “in league with Satan.”

While there was undoubtedly some actual harmless witchery going on, the practice of torturing, hanging or strangling, and burning people for their own private beliefs, for political or religious reasons, or simply because another torture victim pointed them out, was a shameful, horrendous act bringing condemnation down on the organized religions that engaged in such inhumanity. By 1727 it appears the last witch trial in Scotland ended the insanity, though how many families and individuals were still scarred physically and emotionally over this terror?

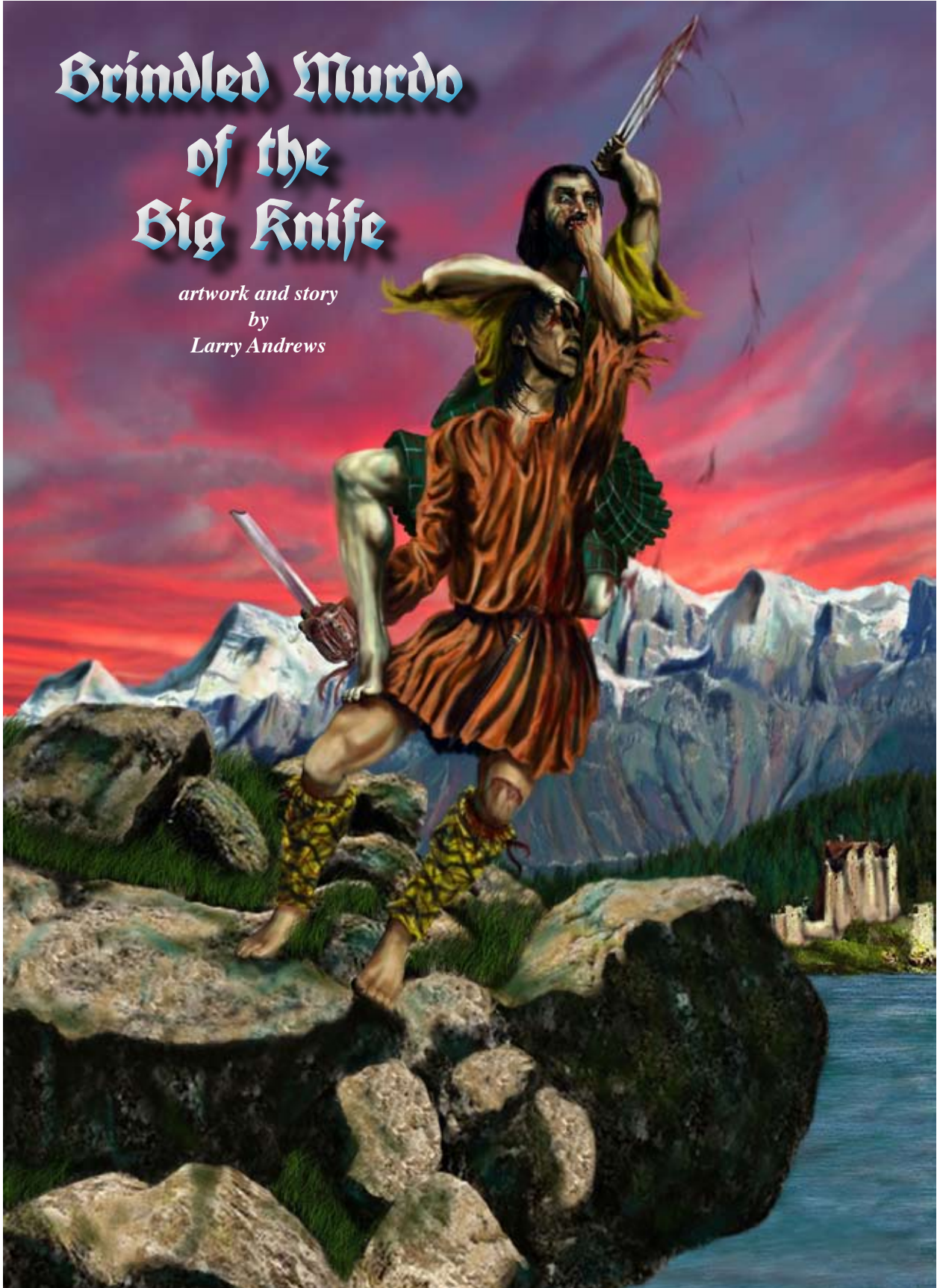
The whole phenomenon was very similar to the Nazi extermination efforts. If there were 5,000 Scots witches tortured and killed during this roughly 200 year period, as some scholars have calculated, and even ten people were involved in each case as suppliers, executioners, judges and sheriffs, then we are looking at a minimum of 50,000 villains all caught up in this sad moment in time. Worldwide, there were likely several hundred thousand involved as villains and another few hundred thousand as victims.

Freedom of religion means freedom of ANY religion and it is so important for everyone to remember that their beliefs could be the next set of beliefs on the gallows and burn piles of time.



Brindled Murdo of the Big Knife

*artwork and story
by
Larry Andrews*





BRINDLED MURDO OF THE BIG KNIFE

Brindled Murdo o' tha big Knife loved his
Hieland hame, little did he ken tha strife that
wad come taе tha same.
Oot hunting tha stag wi his hoons that lad left
his ladies aw a loon.
Ian Dubh Macleod went wantonly for Murdo's
nest where his lust wad gie those poor ladies
nae rest.
Aw nicht Ian Dubh did that evil deed an bound
thaе lasses taе be sure nane wad be freed.
Weel Brindled Murdo wis quick taе gaе his kill
an sae return hame early taе eat his fill.
He found tha dreadful deed that had been din
an caught tha nave on tha rin.
Wi great dirk in hand Murdo rin that deil doon
an shawed nae mercy taе that evil goon.

llA



In Letterewe, under a long line of bonnie blue mountains near Loch Maree, there lived a brave Mackenzie lad noted for his long dirk and brown-black hair. During those long ago ages, names like Ian, Hector, Donald, Angus, Hugh, and Lachlan were so common among clansmen, nicknames were often added to identify different men. As such, a singular trait that distinguished a Highlander's character or appearance would be put with that particular person to clarify one Lachlan from another, and the like.

Brindled Murdo had a beautiful, block-built home near the long Loch Maree. He often went on hunts, alone with his hounds, seeking the chase of the mighty Highland stag. Early one cloud-covered day, Murdo kissed his long-loved wife and daughters goodbye, then the Highlander headed for wild mountains where he could nourish that ever present need in the Gael's high heart – the hunt.

Brindled Murdo kept a good gait, pacing his trot to the stride of happy hounds. They traveled light footed away from Loch Maree making good time over heather-covered hills under a red and purple painted sky. In time, hounds and hunter came to a rising river on their right, a favorite drinking place for deer. Murdo could not help but give a rough-toothed grin as he ran round and leaped over boulders both big and small. Those granite protrusions had, over centuries long past, been picked up by glaciers and scattered round Scotland.

Those hounds and that Highlander kept a calm pace along the river, waiting for the scent that would send them into full flight. They trotted on until the hounds began to bay, their noses nodding in the air, sniffing out the scent of drinking deer. They pricked up their ears, picked up their pace, and the chase was on. Murdo, a lifelong mountaineer, well used to the wild lands

in which he lived, ran on ever faster. He never needed a gasp for breath despite his brisk stride. He bore after his howling hounds, feeling under his fast feet every bump and branch. Murdo grinned with the glory of giving good chase, and without breaking stride, grabbed the bow from his shoulder.

A stag and his roe deer darted from the danger, delicately leaping and dodging through heather and over hill. The Highlander and his hounds kept up a strong pace after that dashing game; the hearts of both chasers and chased pounded full and fast in their purpose. On and on the deer ran, eyes wide in worry. That stag and his roes, kicking hinds high, did not dare to slow their stride.

Baying in the background, long legs leaping, narrow snouts snorting, and jaws gaping, Murdo's deerhounds dashed on after that darting game. The stag's broad rack bounced up and down with each leap from head to hind. Those deer ran as though even the winds were working for them. Ever on that startled stag's flanks followed the Highlander's baying beasts. Brindled Murdo, keeping pace to the call of his hunting hounds, drew from a fur-framed quiver one long, barbed arrow to knock into his bent bow.

The hounds howling suddenly changed to barks and bare-toothed growls, an obvious indication that the great stag stopped running and turned to make a stand. Brindled Murdo picked up his bold pace, leaping over stones and heather, heading fast for hounds and hind. With his head down and a great gaping rack of pointed horns, the stag tried to defend both front and back from the nipping beasts. Strong in his stride, that stout stag twisted, turned, and charged at those nimble, darting deerhounds but could not land a blow. The Highlander, heart racing hard, came upon that ancient feud, paced his breath, bent his bow, and let a barbed blade fly. Thud! The great horned beast gave out a groan. Thud! The stag staggered but a moment and then made a final dash, delaying his doom.

The hounds, a terrible bane to that mighty stag, again took to the chase. Running and wounded



twice by well-placed darts, the stag's life began to leave him. In an impossible turn, the bull deer brought his horns back into the game, delivering a hit that

humbled one of the hounds with a good gash to his hind quarter. Thud! A third dart was put to good purpose and staggered the stag, bringing the exhausted creature down. The dogs, doing their duty, hounded that valiant hind to its very end. Murdo closed carefully, well aware of the danger that still lurked within this dying deer. He came in from behind, took the faltering creature by the head, bent it back, and drew his dirk deep across the stag's throat, then moved from his prey and watched as its life's light left.

The Highlander cleaned the creature, gutting and quartering the brave beast. It was now late in the day and so Murdo made a quick camp, finding shelter in the thick forest where he hung the deer hide and fashioned a small fire. Murdo gathered wood and found water at the rushing river while his hounds tended to each other's wounds, taking careful time to lick clean and fully cleanse their hurts.

The venison was hung high where wolves and his own dogs could not get at it. He then gave his good hounds the guts to gobble and gorge on. To fix his own hunger, the Highlander mixed some cold river water with a bit of oats to make a thick, pasty porridge and also cooked a heavy cut of hindquarter over flickering flames. He spent the night on a heather bed by his beasts, woke early, and made for Loch Maree.

A long row across the loch was a Macleod crannog called *Eilean Gruidh*. An ancient fortalice built out into the loch, sitting about a mile in length from Letterewe. Lying in wait at that wood-wrapped fortress was MacIan Dubh, better known as Black John's son. This young Macleod had long watched the home of Brindled Murdo with wanton interest, for he fancied the lovely lasses that lived there. Many were the

times Murdo took his hounds to the hunt, while hidden high in rocks, MacIan Dubh waited and watched.

Early that day, when Murdo went with his hounds and kissed his lovely ladies goodbye, MacIan Dubh made up his mind to nurture the wanton ideas that had weighed so long at his nature. The evil-hearted clansman put boat to water and left the crannog for Brindled Murdo's happy home. Stealthily he stole across those cold grey-green waters, gaining the other side just before the sun fell from sight.

He then, from a good hiding place, watched the women of that home finish the duties of the day. When the most of their tasks were all taken care of, the women sat about carding wool and singing songs. Like a foul fox, MacIan Dubh crawled ever closer to better see the bonnie lasses at their leisure. He watched those women longingly, pacing his time, licking his lips, and waiting to strike and let his wicked lust loose.

All the women of Brindled Murdo's home were bonnie and blithe from wife to servants, and so casting all care behind, MacIan Dubh lusted for them from first to last.

When the day's end turned to dark, the foul Macleod made fast for Murdo's home and happiness. The lasses had no more than finished their evening food when their door burst open. Standing full in the frame was MacIan Dubh Macleod with wild lust flaming from his eyes. At dirk point, he took those lovely lasses and left none unharmed, letting loose the lust that for so long labored his cold, cruel conscience. He bound the servants, daughters, and the lady, for the full length of that night he left no lass unharmed. Though the ladies of that home cried, kicked, clawed, and keened, their pleas fell on a hard heart deafened by deadly lust.

Before the sun brought in the day, Brindled Murdo bound his fresh venison up in the big deer hide and headed for home. Though the load was heavy, Murdo got back in good time. He instantly noticed something was not right. No servants could be seen, the cows were calling to be milked, and the door was ajar from its jam.

His hounds began to growl and the hair on their hides rose up as they dashed for the door.

Murdo followed fast footed, and on entering his home, found those lovely lasses gagged, bound, and their happy hearts wrecked and ruined. His dogs licked the tears from Murdo's daughters while he cut each of them free.

His wife, without wailing, warned Murdo of MacIán Dubh, "He's grabbed your basket-hilt broadsword and made out the back."

Brindled Murdo could tell without asking what had happened to the happiness of his home. Filled with a fury words cannot quite cover, he dashed from the house in MacIán Dubh's direction. He spotted that bold rapist running fast for life and limb toward the Highlands of Letterewe. Though tears took to Murdo's eyes, they did not disable his aim. Brindled Murdo bent his bow and let loose a barbed dart. The arrow flew fast for its target and took the coward in the calf. MacIán Dubh fell from the hit and at once tried to work that arrow free from his lower leg.

He no more than got the dart out when Brindled Murdo was on him with his great dirk drawn. MacIán Dubh laughed aloud for he figured he had the better end of it as he still held Murdo's sword. He rose up and drew the broad blade from its scabbard. What he did not know was how Brindled Murdo of the big knife came by that famed name, but soon he would learn.

When MacIán Dubh pulled that sword free from its case, he saw that all he held was a broken blade not half as long as it should be. The business end of that blade was in the hand of Brindled Murdo of the big knife.

Mad on so many levels, Murdo leaped on that malicious Macleod like a lion on a lamb and aimed his avenging knife for action. MacIán Dubh tried to get free, but so furiously Murdo tore into him, he could do nothing but bear his fate.

Murdo repeatedly drove his big blade deep into that ravager, until MacIán Dubh fell in his own folly. The lad laid on the ground, bleeding from many bad wounds when he cried out, "I know you must finish me for the wanton way I had with the women of your home, but I beg you first let me crawl to the top of this rocky crag that I might one last time see the home of my clansmen."

Brindled Murdo knelt down by the dying Macleod, took his big knife, and with a gritted grin said, "I'll give you your just due." Then, knife in hand, relieved the Macleod of his manhood.

While MacIán Dubh screamed in agony, bleeding out what was left of his life, Brindled Murdo's hounds gobbled down the rapist's severed body parts.

Not allowing the lad to see his clan lands again, Murdo started piling stones on MacIán Dubh as his last breaths left him.

Last known, that cairn still stands just out of sight of old Macleod lands. To this day, the last home of MacIán Dubh Macleod is called "*Glac Mhic Iain Dhuibh*," – The Dell of Black John's son.

An Deireadh



TALES OF CORNWALL

story and illustrations
by Pollyanna Jones

On the southernmost tip of England is the Duchy of Cornwall, a beautiful and rugged land. One of the six “Celtic Nations” which includes Brittany, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Scotland, and Wales, Cornwall has a distinct culture separate from the rest of England. It has its own language, Cornish (Kernowek) which was in danger of becoming extinct, yet thanks to the efforts of a handful of dedicated people, Kernowek is making a comeback. Kernowek is believed to be similar to Welsh and certainly shares a Brythonic root.

Cornwall (Kernow) is home to around 500,000 people, and shares a border with the county of Devon. The westernmost and southernmost points of the British Isles are found in this area and are known as Land’s End and Lizard Point, respectively.

Whilst Cornwall is technically classed as an English County, it is proud of its culture and strong identity, with a growing desire to self-rule and gain independence from the rest of England. There are calls for a Cornish Assembly to allow Cornwall to govern itself in a fashion similar to Wales.

Cornwall is rich in mineral deposits and has been famous since Roman times for its deposits of tin, which helped fuel the Bronze Age across Europe. Evidence of trade with the Romans has been found near Tintagel. Reminders of Celtic people are found all across the landscape, from dolmens and stone circles, right through to the ruins of settlements such as Chysauster which dates from the Iron Age.

The land is rich in history and folklore, with a story to be told in every town or village. Mermaids dwell beneath the waves, whilst piskies, believed to be a tribe of fairies related to the brownies, cause mischief. Cornwall also has strong links with Arthurian legend. King Arthur is said to have been born in the castle at

Tintagel. Dozmary Pool is said to be the resting place of the sword, Excalibur, and the King of Cornwall features in the tale of Tristram and Isolde. Cornwall’s legends also tell of shipwreckers, smugglers, thieves, murderers, and giants. It is to such foul characters that our attention turns today. So take a seat, maybe grab yourself a pint of scrumpy, and enjoy a few of the tales of the Villains of Cornwall.

Cormoran the Giant

St. Michael’s Mount is an imposing island off the shore near Penzance. At low tide, a granite causeway allows explorers to walk to the Mount, whilst at high tide a boat will ferry you across the bay to a small harbour on the island. Currently owned by the National Trust, the Mount was once a monastery and accounts by witnesses of apparitions of St Michael on the rocky cliffs of the island are said to give the Mount its name.

Legend tells of how the Mount was formed. Long ago, a giant named Cormoran roamed the area around Penzance and Marazion. His temper was as ferocious as his appetite, and he terrorised the local people with frequent raids. Cormoran had made his home in the sea by piling rocks and boulders up to form the Mount.

The giant would attack local farms and villages, stealing livestock and anything else that took his fancy. Many had tried to put a stop to his cruel and greedy antics, and all had failed. The giant would squash them like flies.

The locals were desperate. Faced with little to eat and with all their champions defeated by the giant, the situation was grim. That is until a local miner’s lad named Jack, offered to help. Jack’s mother wept when he stepped forward. She had already lost her dear husband to Cormoran, and the thought of losing her only son was too much to bear.



Illustration by Pollyanna, entitled 'Cormoran's Dinner'

Jack was a clever lad, and convinced his mother to allow him to go. He promised to her that he would return safely and that the giant would trouble them no more. So one night, Jack took his pick, his shovel, and his horn, and set out at low tide to Cormoran's lair in Mount's Bay.

The lad spent all night digging a hole whilst the giant slept. The growling of Cormoran's snores hid from the sounds of shovelling from his ears, and his belly was so full of mutton, beef, and ale, that his sleep was deep. His work finally done, Jack covered the pit with sticks and leaves and hid himself until sunrise.

As the sky paled, Jack blew his horn to wake Cormoran. Furious to be woken so early, the giant flew into a rage and raced down the Mount to find who had disturbed him. Upon seeing Cormoran approach, Jack stood on the far side of the pit and blew his horn again. The giant bellowed in anger, the ground shook with his footsteps, but being a slow-witted monster, he

had not imagined that a trap lay waiting for him. As his hands grasped out to grab the intruder and tear him in two, Cormoran stumbled and toppled into the pit. Jack quickly took up his pick and with both hands brought it down on the giant's skull, killing Cormoran instantly.

As proof of the kill, Jack cut out the giant's heart, which not surprisingly was made of stone. The miner's lad then filled in the pit, burying the giant beneath the earth. Cormoran's reign

of terror was ended. Jack was rewarded by the villagers by being given a fine sword inscribed with a rhyme written in honour of his brave deed, "Here's the valiant Cornishman, who slew the giant Cormoran".

To this day, visitors can see the remains of the pit, and the giant's heart lying on the path leading to the castle at the top of the Mount. It is said that if you step upon the stone heart, you can still feel it beating. I tried when I visited, it's true. And on a stormy night in Mount's Bay, you can still hear Cormoran's angry howls...



Illustration by Pollyanna, entitled 'Jack Heads to Comorans Lair'

Ralph's Cupboard

Cormoran was not the only giant that terrorised the Cornish folk. On the northern coast of Cornwall, near the town of Portreath, dwelt a giant named Wrath. His home was found within a great cavern in the cliffs, which was accessible only from the sea. Named "Ralph's Cupboard" by the locals, the cave was situated at the base of a very tall and steep cliff, and could not be accessed from the land. If any wanted to reach it, they would have to get there by sea. With Wrath ever watchful of approaching ships, none ever dared.

Wrath would sit in wait for any ships passing by, and attack them for their crew and cargo. Sometimes he would stir up great waves with his arms, tipping or sinking his chosen vessels, or else he would wade out to sea and pluck the ship out of the water. If a boat sailed too closely to his cave, he could just reach out and grab it like a child with a bath-toy.

The giant Wrath would take his spoils back to his cupboard, and store his plundered loot in great piles at the back of the cave. Any crew he captured would be his dinner. Tired of losing ships and men to the wicked giant, local seafarers took to sailing past this section of coastline in waters too deep for Wrath to wade out to. Enraged that he was being denied his spoils, the giant would throw great rocks at the passing ships. This was to be Wrath's demise. Giants are not the most intelligent of creatures, and Wrath had unwittingly weakened his cave by removing boulders from its sides. One morning, whilst in

a remarkably bad mood, Wrath took up a great rock and lifting it in both arms, hurled it at a passing fishing-boat. Unfortunately for Wrath, this particular boulder was supporting a great deal of weight of the rock above. With a loud crash, the roof of his cavern collapsed, burying Wrath and his treasure beneath.

If you ever visit Portreath, you can still see the remains of Ralph's Cupboard near Reskajeage. Low tide reveals the boulders that Wrath hurled at unfortunate sea-farers. Maybe you'll even find some of his treasure.

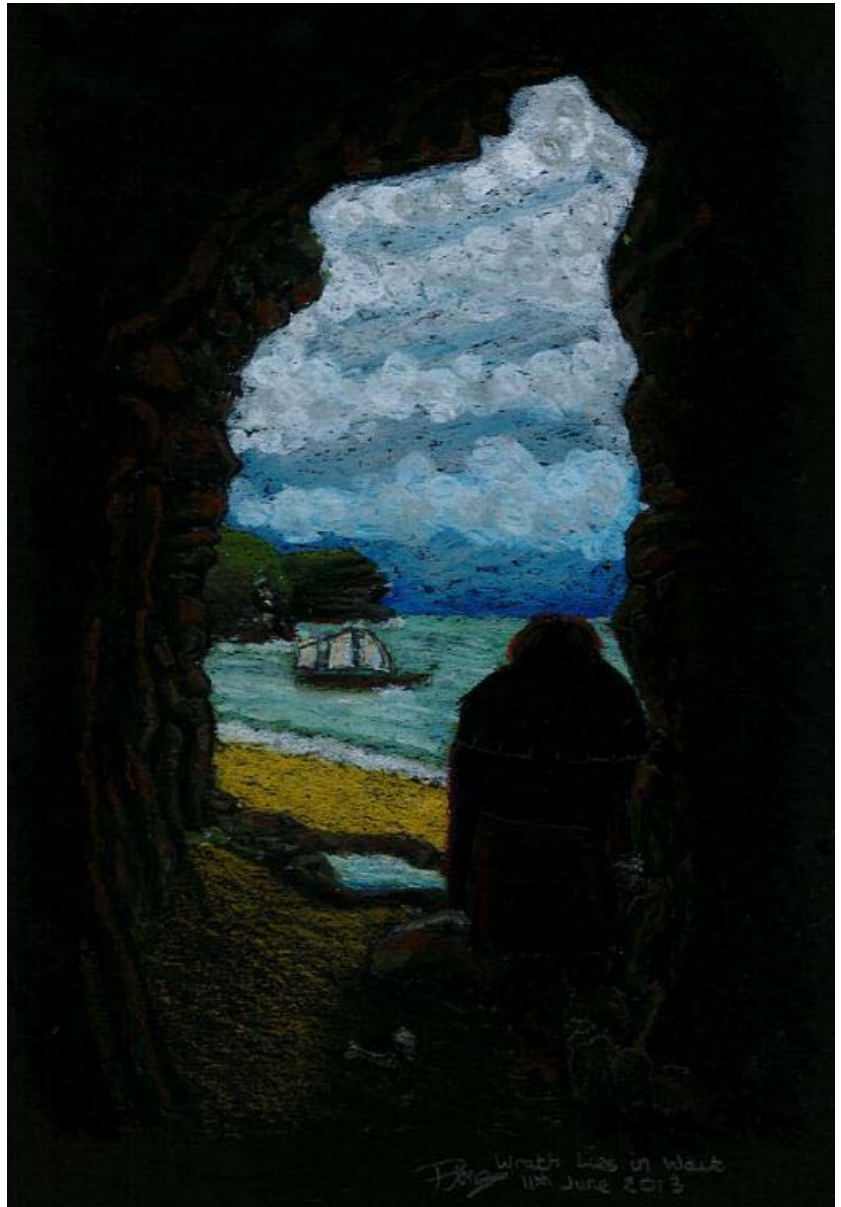


Illustration by Pollyanna, entitled 'Wrath Lies in Wait'

Jan Tregeagle

There are none in Cornwall that are said to be as cruel as Jan Tregeagle. Jan served as a magistrate in the early seventeenth century, and became a wealthy man by robbing an orphan of his estate by forging papers, leaving the poor child destitute. Jan would not serve justice, but his own selfish desires, letting good men hang, or the guilty walk free. As long as he benefitted from the arrangements, he corrupted the law to suit himself. As a rich and powerful man, there was nothing anyone could do to stand up against him, and if they did, something ill would befall them.

Upon his death, it is said that Jan Tregeagle was afraid to pass over as he knew that the Devil was waiting to take his soul. When the time came to read out his last will and testament, there was a great dispute due to the fraudulent manner in which Jan had taken his estate. Matters were

taken to court. When the judge was about to sum up the proceedings, one of the parties asked for a witness and summoned the ghost of Jan Tregeagle himself. The shadowy apparition of this wicked man appeared in the witness stand. Some fled the court in fear, but the judge wanted to see justice done and calmly questioned Jan. Hoping to earn a place in Heaven, Jan admitted to his fraud, allowing the judge to give a verdict in favour of the defendant, the orphan who's home Tregeagle had stolen.

This was not enough to free Tregeagle from Hell, but it was decided that a punishment on earth was in order to spare him from the fires below in return for his good deed in admitting to his crime. The judge decreed that Jan would be set a task for all eternity which would keep him safe from the hell hounds and demons. Jan Tregeagle's spirit was sentenced to empty Dozmary Pool with a limpet shell.



This illustration by Pollyanna, entitled 'Jan Tregeagles Escape' takes place on a stormy night on Bodrin Moor

Believed to be bottomless, this small lake on the remote Bodmin Moor would keep Tregeagle's ghost busy enough, and would keep him away from the good folk. The condition of his sentence was that if he ceased his task, he would be left to the mercy of the demons who would drag him back down to Hell's fiery furnaces.

Tregeagle gladly accepted his punishment and was bound to Dozmary Pool, until many years later a storm tore across the moorlands. Dozmary Pool's waters were whipped up into waves as the wind howled and the rain lashed down across Bodmin Moor. Taking the storm as an opportunity to escape, Tregeagle fled from the pool to Roche Rock. As soon as he left the edge of the waters, the servants of Hell were on his trail, their cries and howls mingling with the winds and din of the storm. Jan could hear his pursuers drawing ever closer, and made for the chapel of St Michael.

Trying to get in through the east window, Jan Tregeagle desperately made a bid for sanctuary in this Christian refuge. However, his entry was barred by holy powers, and his head became stuck through the stained glass, whilst his shoulders would not pass through the window. Here he was wedged fast with his head inside the church, whilst this body was left exposed to the storm and clawing demons. His howls attracted the local priest, who discovered the spirit of Tregeagle in this manner and the demons outside. With the help of two saints, the demons were banished and the Tregeagle was banished to Gwenvor Cove. He was given a new task to keep him busy for eternity; that he would weave a rope from beach sand, and then take the completed rope to Carn Olva.

Yet again, Jan Tregeagle escaped his torment. One winter's night, he completed his task by pouring water over the rope, which then froze solid. Unfortunately for him, a group of local holy men gathered around and set him a new task of weaving the sand rope on condition that he was not allowed to approach water.

To this day, Jan Tregeagle's spirit is bound to Gwenvor Cave. On stormy nights, his howls of torment are said to be heard over the moaning wind which blows his rope apart, scattering the grains of sand across the Whitesand Bay. There are many variations of this tale, and some say that you can hear the tortured howls of Jan Tregeagle over Bodmin Moor. This version has been associated with Pagan legends of the Wild Hunt, where wicked spirits are hunted down to be destroyed forever. Perhaps this would be a more merciful fate for Jan Tregeagle's spirit than what awaits for him in Hell. Having been cheated of a wicked soul, the Devil has a special sort of punishment in mind once he captures his prize.

(Adapted from Cornish Folk Tales)



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Julius Caesar

The Siege on Alesia

By Gregory Schipp

In the annals of ancient history, Gaius Julius Caesar remains one of the most well known figures in the classical world. A politician, a general, a governor, a dictator, Caesar is by far a giant amongst men in Rome's history. From Britain to North Africa, Caesar's life was full of war, adventure, and intrigue. Romans would have looked up to Caesar as a champion of the state.



But from the perspective of the conquered inhabitants of Gaul, Caesar was far from a hero.

Between 58 and 51 B.C.E. the Celtic tribes of Gaul fought a bitter war against Caesar and his army. By 51 B.C.E. Caesar had subjugated most of the Gallic tribes to Roman rule.¹ According to Plutarch, about one million Gauls had been killed, while another million had been sold into slavery.²

To the Gauls, Caesar was a villain that forced the Gallic tribes into submission. The Gauls were fierce in their resistance to Roman conquest. In 52 B.C.E. chieftains of Gaul had met together to discuss rebellion against Rome. The brutal execution of the previous rebel leader, Acco, had frightened the Gallic chieftains, as they believed that the proconsul could dispose anyone who they believed were plotting against them. Roman domination had curbed their power as chieftains. This included their right to raiding their neighbors, seizing power within their own tribes, and settling tribal affairs without Roman intervention. Rebellion was on the horizon.³

The Carnutes led the revolt by attacking the Roman town of Cenabum. The slaughter at Cenabum inspired a young Arvenian noblemen by the name of Vercingetorix to lead a coalition against the Romans. Caesar heard of the revolt in Gaul and took swift action by returning with a small force to quell the rebellion.

¹ Caesar, *The Gallic War*. (Suffolk, UK: St. Edmundsbury Press Ltd. 1917). 551: "So the most warlike nations were subdued".

² Arthur Hugh Clough. *Plutarch's Lives: Volume II*. (New York, NY: Modern Library. 1979). 209

³ Adrian Goldsworthy. *Caesar: The Life of a Colossus*. (London, UK: Yale University Press. 2006). 317, 318

The fate of these two men would be sealed in the short but decisive siege at Alesia. For this article, we will look at the how the strategic decisions of Julius Caesar had ended the siege of Alesia and its aftermath.

Alesia was a hill fort that was thirty miles northwest of what is now Dijon. On the west side of the hill fort was a wide open plain, while the three other sides were made up of hills and ridges.⁴ After the Gallic victory at Gergovia, Vercingetorix had tried to ambush Caesar while enroute to the Province through traveling through the upper Saône. But the attack failed. Caesar was able to gather his forces and repelled the ambush. Vercingetorix was then forced to retreat to Alesia.⁵

Caesar followed close behind the Gauls until they made it to the hill fort. Caesar had the area scouted and came to the conclusion that a direct assault would be too risky. Vercingetorix and the Gauls had the advantage of high ground, and would inflict heavy losses on the Romans. Historian Kate Gilliver argues in her book, *Rome At War*, that this was the Vercingetorix's intention, that by using the environment to their advantage, they could attack the Romans with a pincer maneuver.⁶ Caesar came to the conclusion that a blockade was the most appropriate way to defeating the Gauls.⁷

The Romans began to build their siege weapons, with the perimeter of the siege works that went about eleven miles in length. Camps were placed in strategic positions and twenty-three forts had been constructed along the line. During that time that the Romans were creating these siege weapons, the Gauls had taken notice of the Romans' activities and tried to disrupt their plans. According to Caesar, the Gauls charged at the Roman army, but were hastily beaten back by the German horsemen.

The Germans forced them all the way up to the hill fort, where Vercingetorix ordered the gates to be shut.⁸ After this brief encounter, Caesar had ordered to have a trench be dug within twenty feet of length, and set up another siege work behind to guard against the enemy. Behind this siege work he dug two trenches that were fifteen feet wide and deep, filling the inner one that where the ground was level with the plain he filled with water from one of the rivers. Behind these trenches Caesar ordered the construction of a ramp and palisade that was twelve feet high. Added to these were battlements with large fraises, along with turrets.⁹ Several yards in front of the trenches, rows of sharpened spikes called "lilies", covered pits, and rows of wooden spikes called "spurs", were placed to slow down the momentum of enemy charges, and to provide protection during night raids.¹⁰

Alesia, as it stands today



⁴ Kate Gilliver. *Rome At War: Caesar and His Legacy*. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing Limited. 2005). 70

⁵ J.F.C. Fuller. *Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier and Tyrant*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Da Capo Press, Inc. 1965). 147-148

⁶ Kate Gilliver. 64

⁷ Adrian Goldsworthy. 336

⁸ Caesar. 479,481

⁹ Ibid. 483

¹⁰ Adrian Goldsworthy. 338

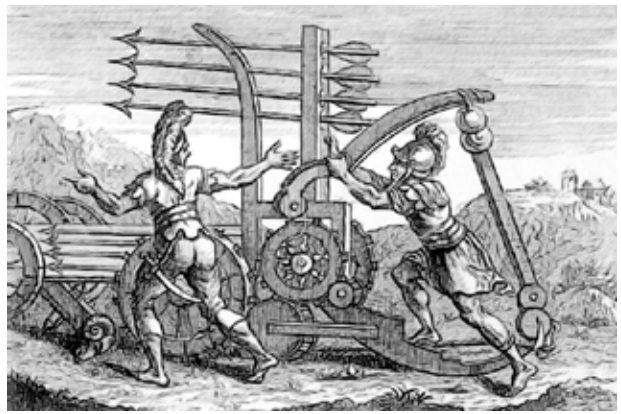
Once completed, Caesar ordered another identical line built outside to protect the Romans from the relieving army.¹¹ Once this was all finished, Caesar then ordered his army to create similar entrenchments facing the other way against the Gauls.¹²

In Alesia, Vercingetorix had sent his cavalry away to raise a relief army. The stocks of grain were taken and distributed, along with the cattle. The Gauls made occasional assaults on the Romans but were unwilling to launch a major strike until outside help arrived. When the chieftains had arrived, they agreed on the number of warriors that would be given.¹³ According to Caesar, there were a total number of eight thousand horsemen and two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers.¹⁴

When the relief for Alesia had come, they had failed to try and attack the fortifications during a midnight raid. According to historian J.F.C. Fuller, the Gauls were beaten back by missiles. The Gauls had fallen through the covered pits, were caught by the “spurs”, and were shot by the turrets and artillery pikes. Failing to penetrate the Romance entrenchments, the Gauls retreated to Alesia.¹⁵

The second assault was aimed at attacking a poorly defended Roman camp at Mt. Reá. ¹⁶ The Gauls had learned from locals that the Romans were unable to include the hill within their lines because of its large circumference. It was guarded by two legions, led by Lieutenant-Generals Gaius Antistius Reginus and Gaius Caninius Reginus.¹⁷

A plan was made to attack this weak spot in hopes of penetrating Caesar’s lines. The Gallic chieftains decided to send sixty thousand picked warriors, led by Vercassivellaunus, to attack this weak point. When Vercingetorix had launched an assault on the inner lines, Vercassivellaunus led the attack on the camp. The Gauls rushed the camp, some discharging missiles while others moved in shield formation. As the situation worsened, Caesar had sent Labienus to reinforce the camp.¹⁸



Siege Machine

Vercingetorix and his warriors had been repulsed in their attacks against the weaker sections, so they switched tactics and began to attack the better protected slopes with few Roman defenders.¹⁹ It’s not mentioned where exactly this location was, but J.F.C. Fuller believed that it might have been at the foot of Mt. Flavigny.²⁰ Three times this area had to be reinforced before the Gauls could be repulsed. It was here that the siege of Alesia had come to an end.

The Gauls fought the defenders with missiles, and were successful in tearing down breastwork and ramparts with grappling hooks. Caesar had sent Legates Brutus and Gaius Fabius to repel the Gauls in this area. After repelling the Gauls in this area, Caesar set out to Labienus’s position.²¹ Legate Lebienus could not hold this position. The Gauls had overrun the trenches and had taken down the ramps.

¹¹ Kate Gilliver. 70-71

¹² Caesar. 487

¹³ Adrian Goldsworthy. 337,338

¹⁴ Caesar. 489

¹⁵ J.F.C. Fuller. 154-155

¹⁶ J.F.C. Fuller. 155

¹⁷ Caesar. 501-503

¹⁸ J.F.C. Fuller. 155, 156

¹⁹ Adrian Goldsworthy. 341

²⁰ J.F.C. Fuller. 156

²¹ Caesar. 507

Lebienus had sent messengers to Caesar to tell him of the situation. Caesar had gathered his cavalry and split them into two. One would follow him while the other half would go to the outer trenches and attack the Gauls from the rear.²² Caesar had reached Lebienus' position and led a cavalry charge against the Gauls. Surprised by the attack, the Gauls had tried to retreat but were too late. Very few made it out alive. Sedulius, the commander and chief of the Lemovices, was killed, while Vercassivellaunus, the warrior that led the attack on the camp at Mt. Reá, was captured.²³

The failure in penetrating Caesar's fortifications, and the low supply of food, convinced the Gauls that surrender was inevitable. In a council meeting, Vercingetorix allowed himself to be handed over to the Romans.²⁴ According to Plutarch, Vercingetorix put on his best armor and rode his horse to meet Caesar. He rode around him before stopping his horse, took off his armor and sat at Caesar's feet before he was taken away.²⁵ While returning twenty thousand prisoners to the Aedui and Arverni, the rest were given to soldiers as human plunder.²⁶ Vercingetorix would be kept prisoner for six years until he was displayed during Caesar's triumphal procession, where he was ritually strangled.²⁷ The casualties of the siege are not the well known. According to Chuck Lyons in an article on the siege, historians believe that the Romans suffered a loss of twelve thousand and eight hundred casualties, while the Gauls suffered two hundred and fifty thousand casualties, along with forty thousand captured.²⁸

The siege on Alesia had ended the revolt in Gaul, though it did not mean that the rebellious spirit of the Gauls was completely snuffed out. Caesar and his army went against the resisting Bituriges and Carnutes, and later with the Bellovaci, Eburones, and Treveri. In the southwestern part of Gaul, Caesar crushed the revolt led by the two rebel leaders, Drappes and Lucterius.²⁹ Those that took part in the revolt at

Uxellodunum were spared, but were punished by having their hands cut off. This was to serve as a reminder that Caesar's mercy was limited.³⁰ In the commentaries, Caesar wrote after his fight at Uxellodunum that, "the most warlike nations were subdued" (The Gallic War, 551). It was true that Caesar had finally subdued Gaul, but this peace would be shattered again by the Bellovaci 46 B.C.E.³¹

²² J.F.C. Fuller. 156

²³ Caesar. 509

²⁴ Adrian Goldsworthy. 342

²⁵ Arthur Hugh Clough. 218

²⁶ Caesar. 509-511

²⁷ Kate Gilliver. 72

²⁸ Chuck Lyons. "The Last Stand of Vercingetorix" *Ancient Warfare* 6, no. 6 (2013). 34

²⁹ Kate Gilliver. 72

³⁰ Chuck Lyons. 34

³¹ Adrian Goldsworthy. 353

Annotated Bibliography

Adrian Goldsworthy. *Caesar: The Life of a Colossus*. (London, UK: Yale University Press. 2006): Goldsworthy's accounts on Caesar are very in depth and easy to understand. It is highly recommended that those who want to understand Caesar's life should look into Goldsworthy's books for good information.

Arthur Hugh Clough. *Plutarch's Lives: Volume II*. (New York, NY: Modern Library. 1979): Arthur Clough's translation of Plutarch is useful in describing an annotated biography of Julius Caesar's life, but does not provide an in depth look at Caesar's strategies on the battle field.

Caesar, *The Gallic War*. (Suffolk, UK: St. Edmundsbury Press Ltd. 1917): Although this literary piece served as propaganda during Caesar's time, this book is perfect for understanding the strategies that Caesar used in his conquest of Gaul.

Chuck Lyons. "The Last Stand of Vercingetorix" *Ancient Warfare* 6, no. 6 (2013): Lyons painstakingly analyzes Caesar's commentaries to provide in depth information on Caesar's strategies during the siege of Alesia.

J.F.C. Fuller. *Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier and Tyrant*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Da Capo Press, Inc. 1965): Fuller provides analyzes the commentaries of Caesar and provides detailed maps of the siege.

Kate Gilliver. *Rome At War: Caesar and His Legacy*. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing Limited. 2005): Gilliver provides a short, easy to understand overview of the Gallic uprising and of Alesia. The problem with her book is that it does not provide an in depth look at the siege itself.

Mouras Encantadas

The Banshees of Gallaecia

by Hugo da Nóbrega Dias

The legends of the *Mouras Encantadas* (enchanted *mouras*) are the most widespread and known fairy tales present in Galician-Portuguese folklore. Every little village, town or city has its *moura encantada* fairy tale and, though varying, all of them have the same structure: an encounter between a local and a *moura encantada*. The *moura* appears, most of the time, combing her long blond hair with a comb made of gold and asks the one who meets her to break the enchantment in return for a treasure of gold, which she is guardian of. If the breaking fails, that person turns into stone or dust, or dies.

Mouras are often found at megalithic monuments, such as dolmens, menhirs, or in caves and, in many cases, near a fountain. Trees, ancient and outlying ways, wells, mines, rocks or crags are other common places for their sightings. Known to have supernatural powers, they look absent from the real world, in a state of sleep. Young maidens of extreme beauty, they are dangerously seductive, attracting people to

their spells as their victims. The places where they are commonly found are gateways to the other world, to the 'World of the Dead' . . . a frontier where supernatural manifestations can happen. The *mouras* guardians of these gates are believed to protect the golden treasures of the *mouros encantados* – little creatures, related to elves, who live underground and are believed to possess fantastic treasures of gold.

Magnificently beautiful, with a light pale skin, seductively combing their long hair, blonde as gold or black as night (sometimes red, in northern versions, near the coast), the *mouras* are attractive to the ones who find them, and their enchanting singing seduces people to pay them favours so they can be released from the spell. The offer, in exchange? Gold in many forms, which can be found in pots. As they are linked to dolmens and funerary tombs, there might be a relationship between this gold believed to belong to the *mouros encantados* and the gold which can be found in ancient tombs from Neolithic and Iron Age.

*Lapa dos Mouros, in Barroso
(stone, top, cover of the mouros)*



The times when they are frequently seen are at midnight or midday, when it was believed that the doors between our world and the world of the supernatural, the World of the Death (*Sídh* in Gaelic and *Além* in Galician) were opened and contact could occur. Fountains, caves, dolmens, megalithic monuments, large stones, hill forts (*castros*) or holes (*cova*) are believed to be gates between the two worlds and the *mouras encantadas* appear always as guardians of these sites.

Also, the times of popular saint celebrations, like that of St. John, are times were encounters abound, as these were celebrations of fertility and season changing. On the night of the 23rd to the 24th of June, Saint John's Eve, which matches the summer solstice, people used to – and still do go to fountains asking for good luck for the upcoming year – fountains where encounters with *mouras* could occur.

Fountains were important to a cult in old Gallaecia (which spread to all Portugal), with people making offerings to them, like Leite de Vasconcelos says in his *Opúsculos* (1888), that the people of Campanhã offer flowers to the Fountain of Our Lady of Campanhã.

And in the morning of Saint John people go to the nearest fountain to wash their faces seven times, in the morning dew. Nowadays, people still do so in Porto (Portugal's second largest city), and it is said that St. John's night is more traditional in the *Fontainhas* (literally little fountains) because of its secular traditional of going to the fountains on that special morning – the first of summer.

There is no fountain in Gallaecia and Portugal which does not have a legend related to a *moura*. Known for their supernatural powers, *mouras* were feared, and tales about encounters ended usually with the death of those who were unfortunate to meet them. *Mouras* were also able to transform into other beings, mainly serpents. Stories of serpents with long blond hair are common. In fact, the serpent cult is widespread in Gallaecia and Portugal as it may be seen in place names all over, referring to these animals. Also, place names related to the *mouras encantadas* are quite common and stones, castles, hill forts, dolmens, caves, mines, villages and many others named after them are found all over the place, like “*Pedra da Moura*” (Stone of the Moura), “*Cova da Moura*” (Hole of the Moura), “*Pala da Moura*” (Shield, Cover or Ceiling of the Moura), “*Lapa da Moura*”, “*Anta da Moura*”, “*Casa da Moura*” and so many others that are impossible to be named here by lack of space.

Among their supernatural powers, carrying stones on their heads while spinning was one of the most common for the *mouras*. Because of that, people say they are responsible for the construction of the hill forts and dolmens, menhirs and other megalithic monuments. Sometimes they are seen with a cover of a dolmen on their heads, others with a *pedra*



*Forno dos Mouros
(Oven of the Mouros)*

formosa of a *castro* (beautiful stone of a hill fort). The beautiful stone of *Briteiros* hill fort is believed to be carried by a *moura*. This characteristic of stone-carrying is related to the one of *Cailleach*, from whom the origin of the *Calaecians* name have been taking, and hence the name of *Gallaecia*.

There is also a huge relationship between *mouras* and other well known mythological being from the Celtic regions. As many of you may have already noticed, they resemble much the Banshees of Gaelic mythology. The *ban síds* - from *Sídh*, the other world - were also creatures related to death, who played the role of conducting the souls to their destiny. They also could be a beautiful maiden, a woman or an old woman, who matched the Celtic tradition of the triple deity like Danu, Brigid or Morrigan.

The scream of the banshees was fatal to the one who listened to it. It was an announcement of death. The singing of the *mouras* has a similar feature because listening to it could be fatal.

Though most of the times a *moura* is a beautiful maiden, she can also be a old scary woman - like *Cailleach* - and is once more linked to the *Velha* (old woman) so present in Galician-Portuguese folklore. The rainbow is called *Arco da Velha* (Old Woman's arch), because it was believed to be caused by the Old Woman, the *Cailleach*, *Cailleach Bheur*, Cally Berry, Black Annis or Gentle Annie . . . all related.

Integrated into this 'psychopomp' mission of

collecting the souls of the chosen ones, *mouras* also have the feature of washing the clothes of the one who is about to die, similar to the banshees. Just as the banshees, they can be seen washing the bloody clothes of the ones who are about to die. In other versions, the clothes are pale and glossing white, and they can often be seen washing at noon.

Mouras are of varied types. They can be *mouras princesas*, *mouras fiandeiras*, *pedras mouras*, *mouras serpes*, *mouras mãe*, *mouras velha* or *mouras lavandeiras*.

Mouras princeses derive from the confusion of these mythological beings with the Moors who invaded the Iberian Peninsula, by having the same name in Galician-Portuguese.

Mouras Fiandeiras are *mouras* who carry large stones on their heads while spinning with a distaff and a spindle. To them is attributed the building of dolmens, *menhirs* and hill forts, and the coins found in these forts are known as *medalhas dos mouros* (medals of the *mouros*).

Pedra Moura are stones where *mouras* live. It is a kind of *moura* who lives inside the stone and someone who sighted one of these became enchanted.

Mouras serpes are *mouras* who have the form of a serpent and they can also have forms of other animals, like horses, dogs or goats. These *mouras* like being offered milk. They also can be half woman and half serpent, most of the times with wings.

This characteristic of being winged is present in the cult of the Our Lady, who sometimes appears with a winged serpent by her feet and is present in heraldry all over Gallaecia and Portugal.

Mouras Lavandeiras are *mouras* who wash the clothes of the ones about to die, as we saw above, and are related to the *Kannerezed Noz* of Brittany or *Les Lavandières*, and the *Bean Nighe* of Scottish mythology, the Midnight Washerwomen.

Although they may be seen by daylight, mainly in the sunshine of noon, they are mostly

seen at night, when gods and beings from the world of death appear and reunite.

The sites where they can be seen are all related to the underworld, to the world of *Sídh*, to the *Além* (Galician-Portuguese name for the world of the dead). The world where the *mouras* live, along with the *mouros*, is called the *Mourama* and these sites are gateways to their world, where they leave and return. The *mouros* are responsible for the enchantment of the *mouras*, in order to keep them as guardians of their treasures. *Mouros* can be seen next to *mouras*, somewhat distant from them, and some of them can be their father, also the one who is responsible for their enchantment. They can also be seen with other *mouras*, most of the time with three of them, like the three midnight washerwomen.

The number three is a theme very constant in popular tradition, as three is the number of turns around the church in celebrations, the number of rubs in a stone while asking for a wish, or the turns of the sun on St. John's, or even the turn of the sun in Fátima, whose sightings can be related to the ones of the *mouras*, as they share common features.

The root of the word *mouras* derives from the Celtic **MRVOS*, and originated *mortus* in Latin. Because of the presence of the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, many confuse the *mouros* from the world of the dead with the Moors who invaded Portugal and Gallaecia, as they are also called *Mouros* in Galician-Portuguese. That confusion is in the origin of the *Moura Princesa*, where the *moura* is a Moor princess.

The enchantment can be broken and to do so, the *mouras* may ask for a kiss, a cake, milk, the pronunciation of a certain word, or for a realization of some chore like not looking at her. To fail means not to free the *moura* and “*dobrar o encanto*” (double the spell), lose the treasure or lose the beloved *moura* and it results in

death, most of the times.

The legends where bread is asked for may be related to the old traditions of offering food to the dead, as the cult of dead was very common in Gallaecia until recent times. In the same way, the offering of milk may be related with the offerings made to the waters and snakes. Popular tradition mentions that snakes like milk and stories of snakes who feed on women breasts at night while they sleep are well spread. The *mouras*, when disenchanted may become human and marry her savior or disappear.

The world of the *Mourama*, where the *Mouras* and the *Mouros* live, is a fantastic world of rich tradition that links the Galician-Portuguese folklore with other countries of the Celtic Fringe – its natural mythological and ethnic background. *Mouras* and *Mouros* may not be true villains, but you may be sure that no one wishes to meet one, especially if they are washing your clothes!

illustration by
Eva Merlán



So, what's next?

Our “Villains” issue manages to show some of the darker side of Celtic history. Piotr, our new writer from Poland, will continue this vein of article over the next few months, while still sticking to the issue theme as much as possible. We are pretty open for tenuous segues of our monthly theme as they often provide some of the most interesting of articles - for instance the Ogham stones angle in last month's Chronicles issue, or the body snatchers article and others in this month's issue. The theme formula is meant as a loose ‘guide’ for our authors. The theme idea came about by chance and has led to some very interesting issues.

For August we are going to look at “Archetypes” - ideal or stereotypical examples of people, places and things Celtic. I expect surprises once again. For September we are going to stray just slightly from our non-fiction narrative style to an issue themed “The Muse” which will feature artistic stories and what not, revolving around the Celts or Vikings, but not necessarily telling a historical tale . . . though some might. That's the fun of it - you never know.

In October we will naturally feature tales of Samhain and Halloween, and maybe even some other Celtic holidays thrown in along with a few ghost tales.

Our reach continues to expand beyond the ‘normal’ Celtic nations of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, etc, plus the honorary England, Canada, and the U.S. to more far-reaching places like Poland, Portugal and elsewhere. It seems, if there is even a trace of the Celtic culture left behind in a country, you will find people in that country searching it out, celebrating it, and writing about it. We are the lucky ones, for they write about it in the pages of the Celtic Guide! Who knew?

Our biggest news to announce is that it appears we will have a Celtic Guide interview in the September “Muse” issue with Natalie MacMaster of Cape Breton. She has been called the most dynamic Celtic music performer in our lifetime, and is certainly in the running for the best fiddler alive! I have seen her perform twice and can attest that hers is a show NOT TO MISS. Hopefully, our interview will also be an interview not to miss. Look for this in the September Celtic Guide.

Celtic Guide in Print!

In response to many requests to make issues of Celtic Guide available in hard copy print versions, we have begun to make this happen. The recent May issue was first to go online and was followed by the March 2013 issue. Now all of 2013 past issues are available; 2012 is next!

No profit from these print issues go into Celtic Guide coffers; they are meant only as a service to our readers. Costs will vary depending on the length of the issue. We've had some months with as many as 54 pages, while the very first month had only 12. We notice that Amazon will at times put one of the issues on sale for an even better bargain.

We had no idea the response would be so great for the Guide, or for hard copies. Authors and readers have come out of the woodwork, and we are so proud of the library of articles we have already assembled. Now you can archive them on your bookshelf as well as on your computer.

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