

# Celtic Guide

Volume 3, Issue 10 • October 2014

HALLO.  
WENN

## From the Editor



Hey, it's spooky time! I found it a bit spooky when two different people came up to me at a Highland Games, in August, to thank me and congratulate me on the *Celtic Guide*. One was from the Clan Hunter clan tent, another was a Montgomery. The Hunter gentleman recognized me from the little drawing, to the left, that accompanies this opening page, each month. It is so nice to know folks are enjoying our efforts. Nothing but good comments all the way.

Another semi-spooky thing happened when I got an email from a band in Transylvania, Romania, which has two missions – one, to create the first Romanian Celtic Festival, and two – to reclaim Vlad Dracula's reputation from the version of his life told by Bram Stoker, the Irish author. And to that end, we have an interview with the band in this issue.

Of course, Halloween wasn't originally meant to be spooky. According to many academic scholars, Halloween, or All Hallows' Eve, is a Christianized feast initially influenced by Celtic harvest festivals, particularly the Gaelic *Samhain*. The tradition of going from door to door receiving food existed early in Great Britain and Ireland in the form of "souling," where children and poor people would sing and say prayers for the dead in return for cakes. "Guising"—children disguised in costumes going from door to door for food and coins—also predates trick or treat, and is recorded in Scotland at Halloween in 1895, with masqueraders carrying lanterns made out of scooped-out turnips. While going from door to door in disguise has remained popular among Scots and Irish, the custom of "trick or treating" has now become common in many countries. Enjoy!

**EDITOR'S NOTE: I am not oblivious to the "No" vote in Scotland this September. There doesn't seem much to say at this point. While there are two sides to every story, my first thought is that Wallace and Bruce and a million other brave Scottish freedom fighters must be rolling over in their graves. Many of Scottish descent in America are deeply saddened by the results. But again, there are two sides, I suppose. I guess I won't need to book that Scotland celebration-vacation, afterall. Enough said.**

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by Jim McQuiston  
USA

# A Celtic Guide interview – TRANSYLVANIA'S PHOENIX

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For October, we start off with an extremely interesting interview with Nicu Covaci, the leader of a musical group known as PHOENIX. What makes this so special is that Nicu and his bandmates hail from Transylvania, Romania. This group is determined to kick off the very first Celtic Festival in Romania, planned for 2015, if all goes well and enough support is found. We plan to help them in any way we can. They have, as an additional goal, to reclaim the reputation of Vlad the Impaler – the inspiration for Bram Stocker's novel, *Dracula*.

**CG:** Welcome to the pages of *Celtic Guide*. Yours is a very interesting story. Can you tell us why you wish to establish the first Celtic Festival in Romania?

**NICU:** I started making music fifty years ago, in Romania. When we were young, we were influenced by all kinds of Western music – bands like the Shadows, the Byrds, and later, the Beatles. But in the 70s we found our own style, based on old Romanian folklore. Our folk heritage has a lot of Celtic music in it!

In certain areas of Romania, like Transylvania (the Romanian spelling) or Maramures (a beautiful, traditional land in the north of the country), you can observe these influences if you know what you are looking for.

I thought about a Celtic festival a few years ago, and my main goal is to let today's Celts know you still have a few cousins here !



*Nicu Covaci*

**CG:** Do you feel your own music has a touch of Celtic-ness to it?

**NICU:** I made a few albums in the 70s, before leaving the country. Later when I studied my songs, after a lot of experience, I noticed that I used Celtic themes and influences when building them, without any knowledge or intention. Learning about Celtic music gave me the opportunity to see how my music has a lot in common with it - and how a lot of traditional songs from Romania have the same influence. We never learned this in school. No one ever told us. I also studied our history and found out

incredible details about this connection. This is another reason why I wish to establish a Celtic festival – I was in love with this music without even knowing it !

**CG:** Are you finding any support from the government or other interested parties?

**NICU:** This is the hardest part. We have everything we need – relationships with great musicians, support from international artists and mass media, a great plan – but we are still searching for sponsors and supporters. It will be the first edition and the public is not educated in this direction yet, and does not have a lot of information about Celtic culture. This is what we are trying to change.

My personal problem with our government and our institutions (the ones responsible for representing us in other countries) is that they always send artists from other cultures and minorities to represent Romania at international festivals or music events. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against their artists. They have amazing talents. But this is not our culture ! We are partially Celts!

Surprisingly, I have found support from complete strangers. I contacted artists and mass media representatives from Ireland and from the USA, and every one of them was excited to be a part of this and help us in anyway they can. This made me think it will be worth it, so I am still searching for sponsors.



**Find PHOENIX online at:**  
[www.formatiaphoenix.ro](http://www.formatiaphoenix.ro)  
[www.facebook.com/TranssylvaniaPhoenixOficial](https://www.facebook.com/TranssylvaniaPhoenixOficial)

**CG:** We find that you are one of the only bands to have a history spanning over 50 years, besides the Rolling Stones. How has your music changed in that time?

**NICU:** It is very challenging to keep a direction for over 50 years. PHOENIX is more than a band: it is now an idea, a concept, a philosophy. To understand us and our music, you must first understand the context that created us. We started in 1962, in a communist country. Ten or twelve years later, we became dangerous! We were five boys that gathered 50,000 people at one concert. And we defied everything. So the state authorities intuited the danger: they banned us.

Despite our being banned, we released *Cantafabule*, still considered to be the best Romanian rock album of all time. And then, in 1977, I gave them the biggest strike anyone ever did – we left the country. And one does not simply leave communist Romania....

I got married in 1976 to a girlfriend from Amsterdam, because Romanian state authorities were trying to find something to send me to jail. In 1977, I returned home to get my instruments. And I did. The only thing they did not see coming was that, in the Marshall speaker boxes, the boys were hidden – my band members.

I hid them in the speakers and crossed the state border, helping them escape from Romania, under illegal conditions. We could have died, if they discovered us. And that was the moment when we became **myth**: we did something no one thought possible.

After this escape, we became an idea. PHOENIX represented not only a music band, but also an idea about rebellion, cultural values and about freedom.

When I was able to return home, in 1990, I noticed that I had something more to care about: responsibility! Youths are so confused today, they've lost their values, and I am trying to keep the same direction.

PHOENIX has had over 40 members in 50 years. We had international and recognized artists, and also local young artists. I now have a

14-year-old-drummer! He is a revelation in this country. Of course some things change, because of each band member's personal interpretation or philosophy, but the main direction of the band always stays the same.

I have composed over 150 songs for this band, in 50 years. My level of understanding has changed over the years and I learned a lot of things. Today, when I listen to my old songs from the 70s (my first folklore-Celtic influenced album), I am surprised and amused to see how childish but sincere it seems to me. My music is more complex and elevated now, but the concept is the same. We have a style, we have a message, and this is not allowed to change.

**CG:** We understand that you also have been attempting to change the perception of Vlad the Impaler established by Irish author Bram Stoker in his novel *Dracula*. Can you tell us about your efforts in this regard?

**NICU:** The legend of Dracula is based on the personality of Vlad the Impaler, but people do not actually know the whole story. I travelled a lot and noticed that people from Western countries always think he was a bloodthirsty sociopath, and the myth about Dracula is based on this quality. He actually did a lot for his country and changed our history. He was a great leader and his battle with the Ottoman Empire kept Europe safe for a long time.

About the way he used to deal with things, our history states that during his time you could leave a bag of gold in the middle of the road and no one would have dared to steal it, because his punishments for thieves were extremely cruel. He impaled the traitors and the country's enemies, as our leader, trying to scare the Ottoman Empire. And he actually succeeded in keeping them away for some time.

I was fascinated by him because he is the only Christian fanatic I know. The Muslims have this: they believe so much, they are able to die for a religious idea. Vlad Tepes was actually a fanatic in the opposite way and he used every resource he had to fight the Ottoman Empire.

So I built a story and screenplay and I wanted to present this idea, in a modern way: Vlad the Impaler makes a pact with the Devil and he is alive today. He travels through Europe with a motorcycle band and fights every bit of residue he can find from the old empire.

I had some influential connections at the time and I found myself in Hollywood, talking with some important movie producers who liked the idea. We talked about it and they were very interested. At one point in the brainstorming, one of them asked me: "OK, when does he bite?"

I was confused.

He insisted with the question. I told them this is not what I am trying to present, a modern Dracula, a vampire from bedtime stories who finds young girls and bites their necks. This is about something else. He was a Christian fanatic, and he was more than that stereotype.

In reply, they said: "Yes, but, you know, people have to recognize him; we have to make a connection with the legend and he has to bite."

At that point, I left, losing a few million dollars, of course, and the opportunity to make a movie, but that was not what I signed up for.

It may be a coincidence, but I am working now on a new album called *Vlad the Impaler*. It is a collection of songs about our leaders from the Middle Ages and their efforts to keep their land and fight their enemies.

**CG:** What is that one thing you'd like *Celtic Guide* readers to know about your band?

**NICU:** I think we are a unique story not only because of our music, but also because of some cruel realities that happened in eastern countries.

We may represent the only music band that risked everything to be free – free to make music. We paid huge prices for this, but our music is proof that it was all worth it. And now, after 52 years, I am working on a new album with my old friends and new ones, and I hope that someday I will sit in the audience and listen to a young, reborn PHOENIX band.

# A CUP OF TODDY

by Kelli Lowry  
USA ©2004

The ringing of a telephone caught his attention, then a screen door slammed behind the woman entering a nearby residence.

Seeing a clear glass cup of golden liquid on the small table, he turned to wander along the sidewalk in that direction, unable to resist the temptation of discovering if it was what he believed it truly was.

He was pleased at the shade cast over him by the large oak tree and silently walked up the steps, giving a quick glance toward the door. He was safe for now.

Resting the tool he carried against the side of the porch rail, he half listened to the conversation as he sat down on the swing. Reaching over, he picked up the warm cup and found it was, indeed, what he'd believed it was. Taking a deep drink, he relished the taste of whiskey, cloves, and lemon. A contented sigh escaped his lips as he stared down into the liquid, pleased with the contrast of sweetness from the brown sugar.

He quickly drank the rest and set the glass cup down without a sound.

Standing, he straightened his robes, adjusted his hood, and picked up his customary implement.



*The traditional Scottish preparation of a hot toddy involves the mixture of whiskey, boiling water and sugar or honey. Additional ingredients such as cloves, a lemon slice or cinnamon sticks may be added. The Irish version, "hot whiskey," generally uses Irish whiskey, brown sugar, a lemon slice with cloves, and hot water. The hot toddy is thought to have first made its way to Scotland, where it became famous, by way of India.*

With a sauntering stride along the sidewalk, he enjoyed the beauty of the chilly autumn day.

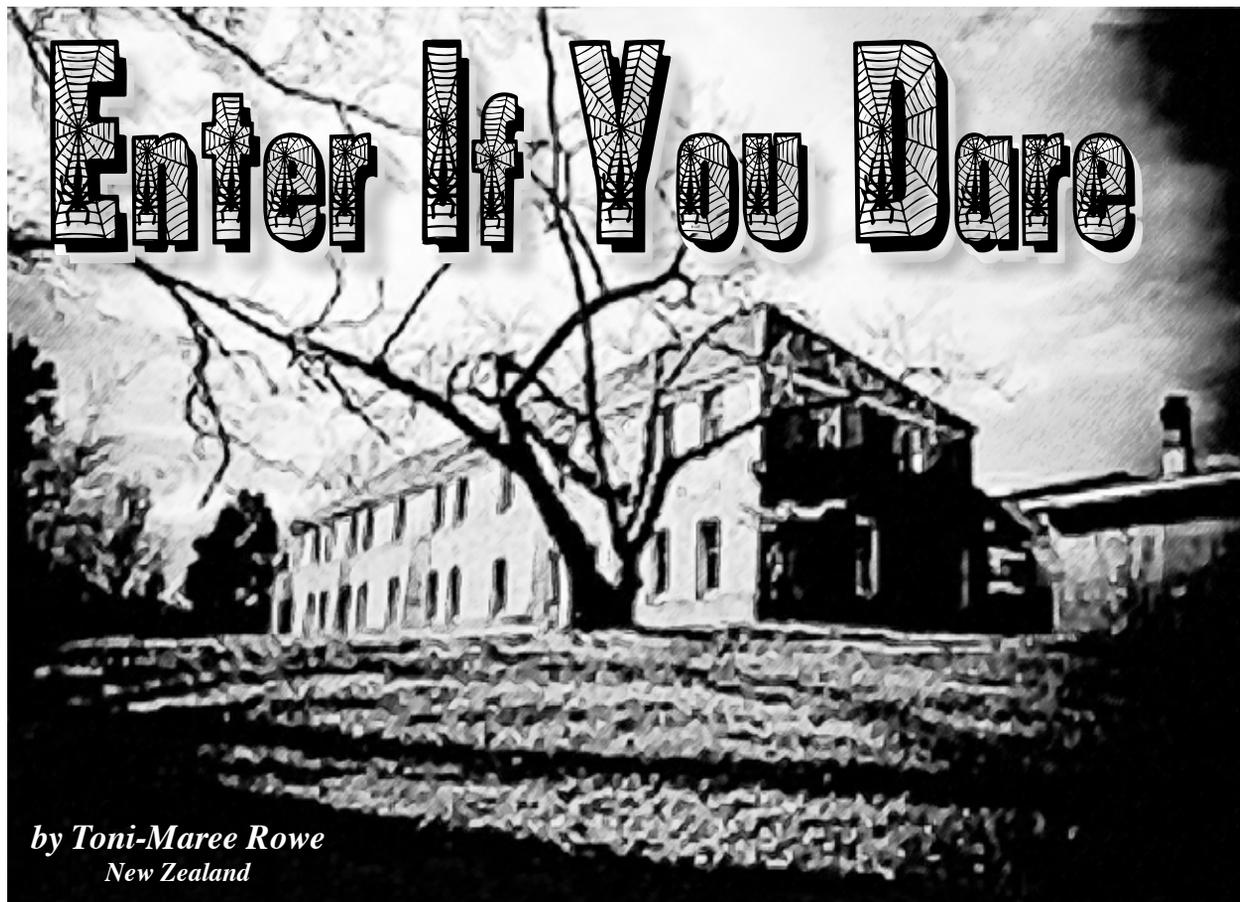
Hearing a step on the porch, while she was talking, the woman turned and looked out. Catching sight of a black-cloaked figure walking away, she gasped upon realizing who it was.

With a casual wave in her direction, the personage continued on his way.

Staring after Death, she waited until he was out of sight before going to sit down shakily on the swing. Reaching over absentmindedly, she noted the fresh cup of hot toddy that she'd just made was...empty.

So, the Grim Reaper likes hot toddies. Interesting. She wondered if anyone would ever believe her.

No, likely not.



What comes to mind when you think of Halloween? Trick or treat? Fancy dress? Ghosts? Witches? Ghouls? Or, what about a bit of “scare tourism”? Increasingly people are being convinced to part with their money in return for a good old-fashioned fright. Ghost tours of our big cities are ever popular and haunted houses will always have an allure for some.

This article will review two very different forms of “scare tourism.” The first is from here in New Zealand where a group of enterprising folk have taken this one step further, creating a “scream park,” whilst the second is your more traditional haunted house – Pengersick Castle in Cornwall.

### **Kingseat – Spookers**

In a small corner of south Auckland sits a complex of abandoned buildings known as Kingseat, a psychiatric hospital. It opened in 1932 and was named after a similar hospital in Aberdeenshire. By 1947, the hospital had over

800 patients. However, changing policies in the early 1990s saw Kingseat close its doors for good in 1999.

By 2004, more than 200 people had come forward to file complaints of abuse and mistreatment during the 1960s and 1970s.

There are still many unresolved issues surrounding the hospital. Perhaps as a result of its reputation, Kingseat has become known as the most haunted place in Auckland. The most common sighting is of a figure known as “the Grey Nurse,” often seen in and around the old nurse’s quarters. Security guards often hear odd banging noises and others have witnessed lights flickering on and off in the middle of the night in parts of the hospital where there is no longer any electricity.

Perhaps the spookiest story is the one of the five-year-old girl who drew a picture of nurses with crosses on their uniforms helping a patient in a wheelchair, and another of people in gowns walking through a grove of trees.

The young girl was visiting her aunt, who lives nearby the hospital, many years after it had closed down, when she drew the pictures whilst looking out a window.



*Above is Kingseat Hospital from a 2008 wiki photograph posted by "haunt of the fatherbird."*

Nowadays, Kingseat is the home of "Spookers" dubbed "Australia's only scream park." Out of respect for past inmates of the hospital, Spookers only operates out of the nurse's quarters and not the hospital itself. It is a very popular attraction where people pay to be terrified.

Friday and Saturday nights are strictly R16 (unsuitable for children under 16), but they also put on family-friendly events, kids' birthday party (where the scare is tailored to the children), weddings and conferences. Special events include "Asylum Paintball" and "Run For Your Freak'n Life," the latter being a 5km obstacle race with professional zombies chasing you.

To quote the Spookers website, "Spookers is a live entertainment experience in which the victims (you!) move through theatrically themed Haunted Houses, and outdoor environments populated by sets, props and live scare-actors. As you walk through the experiences you will encounter visual, tactile and sound effects intended to scare the yell out of you."

I am sure you are all asking, "Have you been to Spookers?" Well, no. Personally I find horror movies impossible to watch and I believe this is all the worst horror movies rolled into one big scary experience and it would probably do me in!

## **Pengersick Castle**

Situated in the west of Cornwall, in the small hamlet of Praa Sands, Pengersick Castle has the reputation of being the most haunted place in all of Cornwall, and some say in all of England. Having visited the castle on several occasions, I can certainly say it is the most intriguing of places.

To the best of knowledge there has been a building here since at least the thirteenth century. The earliest documentary evidence dates from 1391 and 1400, describing the original fortified manor house as being granted a license "to crenellate," or fortify for military purposes.

The family associated with this early phase of occupation are the Pengersicks (Pengyrsck). Its original owner appears to be a Henry Pengersick who developed something of a reputation due mainly to being excommunicated in 1335 for assaulting a monk from Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire, who came collecting tithes.



*Pengersick Castle (Rod Allday - geograph.co.uk)*

The **Haunted Britain** website describes Henry as a psychopath who killed the monk and caused a great deal of grief, all of which is

unfounded and seems to have been exaggerated for the purpose of the television show of the same name.

By the 1500s, Pengersick Castle passed into the hands of William Worth, a former High Sheriff of Cornwall. Further work was done to improve and enlarge it when the Milliton family acquired the house a few years later.

All that remains of this heavily fortified manor house is the four-story tower that can be seen today. Originally there would have been two rectangular courtyards, the larger one on the eastern side which is now the garden, and the smaller one on the western side which is now the farmyard. In 1556, the estate was divided up amongst the seven daughters of William Milliton and from then on the castle fell into decline. Much of the north range of buildings were pulled down and reused in nearby farms as can be demonstrated by the fine Tudor doorway built into the front of a farmhouse, circa 1870.

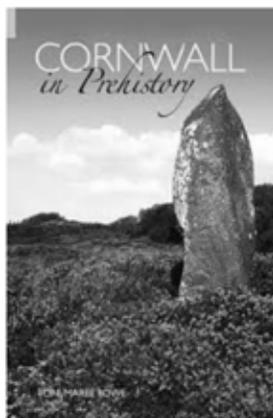
The remaining tower is interpreted as a “self contained refuge” similar to a castle keep and seems to have been constructed as a short-term defence against the very real threat from French and Spanish raids on this coast at the time. The four floors of the tower go from being purely defensive at the ground floor level to purely domestic at the top.

It can be quite difficult to separate the fact from the fiction where Pengersick is concerned; often the sensational overwhelms the true story which can be equally fascinating, if not more so. At Pengersick today the visitor can participate in special monthly ghost hunting events. Unlike the events at Kingseat, these are not designed to terrify, but are a more gentle introduction to the paranormal, the purpose being to educate rather than scare (although there can be a bit of that too, depending on the person). **Ghosthunting Cornwall** organises these events with permission from

the owners and they are also very popular. Personally I have attended two such ghost hunting events and have experienced several “odd moments.”

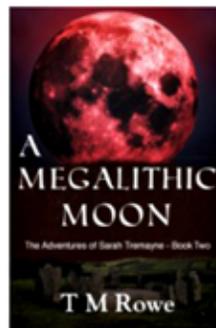
It is reported that there are some twenty ghosts who haunt Pengersick. The most common is a monk seen at the end of the medieval garden wearing a wide-brimmed hat (as you might do when gardening on hot summer’s day). There is the ghost of young girl who is said to haunt the battlements after she was blown over the edge by a strong gust of wind. Some people have reported a feeling of being pushed when standing at the top of the tower. In the rooms downstairs, women have said to feel the presence of a small hand in theirs, or a gentle tug on their skirt, only to find no child there. There have been women seen walking through walls, a girl lying on a bed, and many more sightings.

The first time I visited the castle, I went with a healthy dose of scepticism. It seemed like a bit of fun. so imagine my surprise when I found myself sitting in the bedroom of the tower wondering why I could feel a small hand in mine?



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Perhaps I am just very suggestible, but I like to think I am not that gullible. I returned for a second visit with my husband who holds all things supernatural in contempt (he is a little less in contempt nowadays).

As with every tour, guests spend time in the garden area and visit the site where unfortunate victims of the Black Death were buried (these are often referred to as the plague pits). During our visit to the garden, my husband took a photo with his digital camera. The picture showed a low mist around the legs of the people in the group – it was a clear night with no mist or fog. Unfortunately that photo (along with many others) was corrupted later by a virus.

The second unusual event occurred on the way to the “plague pits.” I was at the rear of the group and walking up some steps, when from the corner of my eye I saw a “branch” heading

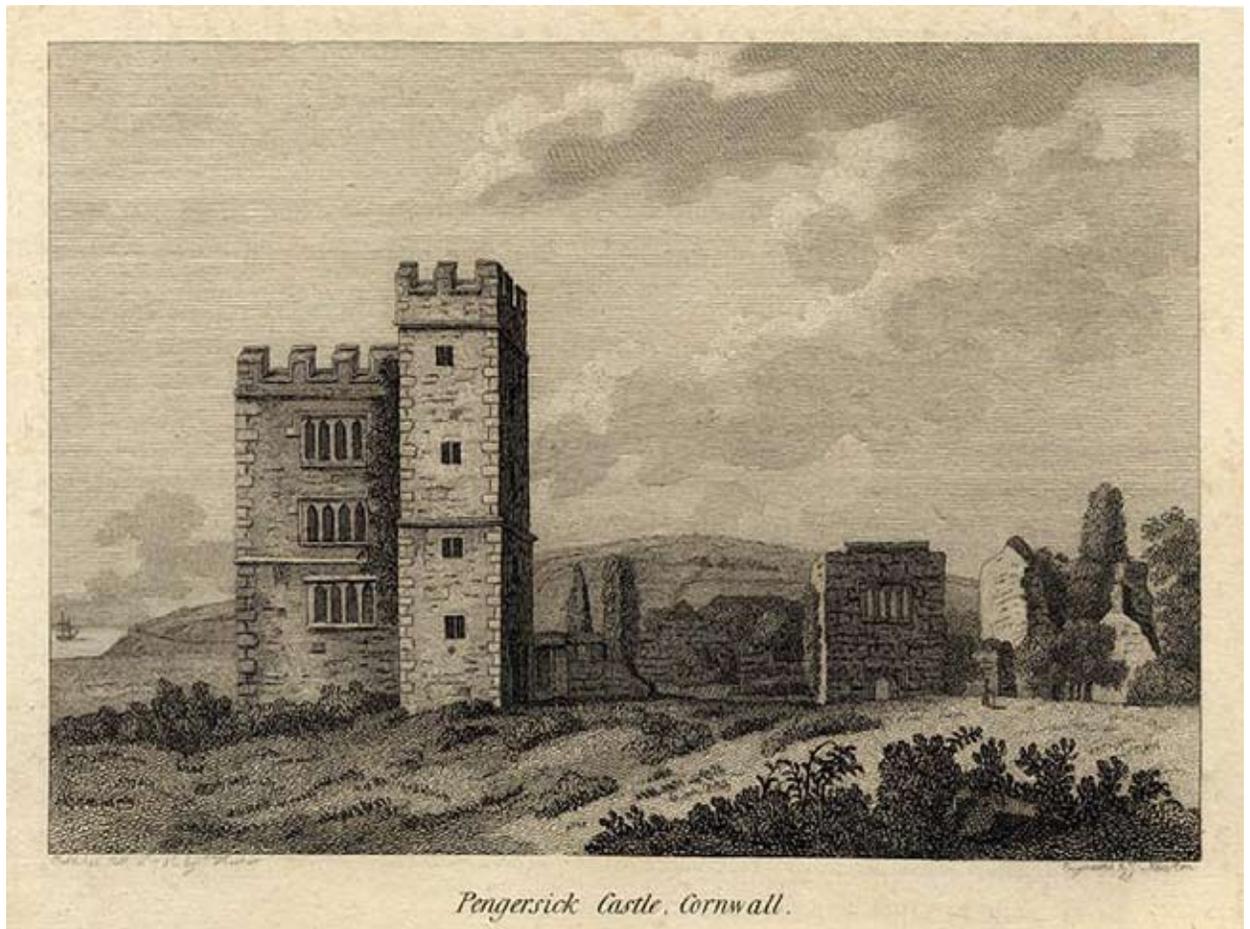
towards me; I ducked quickly and the branch passed harmlessly over me. Stopping, I turned and looked around only to realise it couldn't have been a branch, as there were no trees close enough. What it was I do not know, but it definitely gave me pause for thought.

There are many stories told by people who have visited Pengersick - many tales of ghostly encounters - and yet, for myself I never felt truly frightened, a little apprehensive in the beginning, maybe, but no one “scared the yell” out of me, and therein lies the difference between the two attractions. Ghosts I can cope with, but chainsaw-wielding maniacs, that's a different story...

Websites:

[www.spookers.co.nz](http://www.spookers.co.nz)

[www.ghosthuntingcornwall.co.uk](http://www.ghosthuntingcornwall.co.uk)

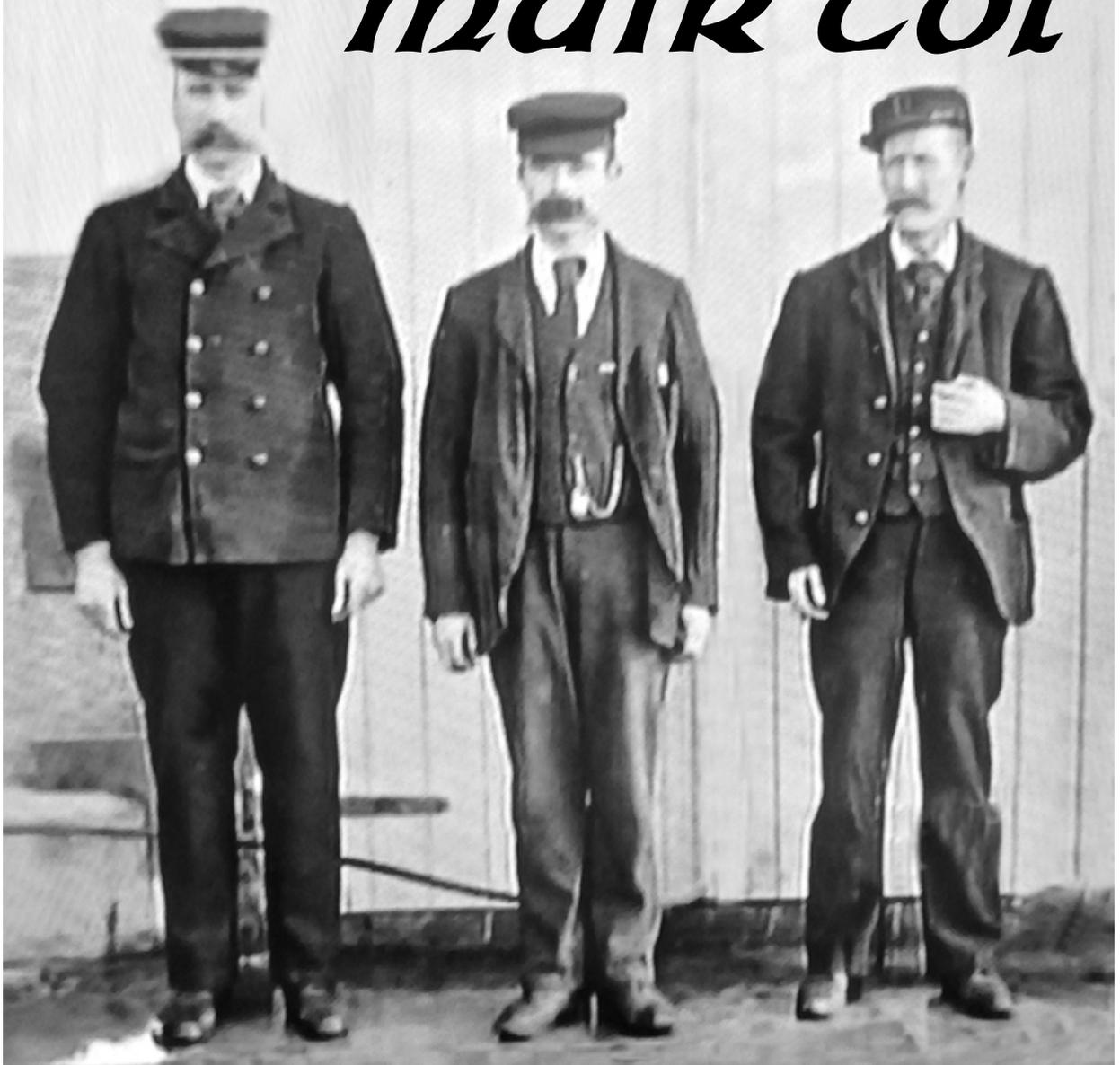


*Pengersick Castle, Cornwall.*

*“Pengerswick Castle, Cornwall” copper-engraved print published in Francis Grose’s Antiquities of England and Wales, 1786.*

by Jim McQuiston  
USA

# *muir col*



*Above is the only known photograph of three lighthouse keepers who mysteriously disappeared from their station on the desolate and remote Flannan Isles, located off the northwest coast of Scotland. This photograph was taken over one hundred years ago, in the year 1900. The man to the left is believed to be Thomas Marshall, while the other two are James Ducat and Donald MacArthur, or vice versa.*

The expression *Muir Col* seems to have been coined by or at least recorded for posterity by one Niall Beag, a worker who helped build a lighthouse on the Flannan Isles, and one of many people who have since tried to solve the mystery of what happened to three of its first occupants.

It was in December of 1900 that the three men shown above were left alone at the lighthouse, which was built less than a year earlier to signal boats approaching the seven islands that make up the Flannan Isles. These islands were said to have been first settled by St. Flannan, and thus their name.

The word *Muir* is a fairly common personal name in Scottish history, generally meaning “large,” or in some cases, “older.” An example can be found in Angus Mor, father of Angus Og – “og” meaning the younger or smaller, much like today you might find Angus senior and Angus junior in the same family. It is sometimes pronounced “mee-ur” but just as often pronounced as “more.”

Perhaps the most famous Muir was a Scottish-American naturalist, John Muir, who wrote extensively about a massive glacier in Alaska, which eventually became known as the Muir Glacier.

Also, Elizabeth Muir was the wife of Robert, High Steward of Scotland and Guardian of Scotland, who later became King Robert II of Scotland. Her name has also been spelled Mure and More in historical documents.

The very island amongst the Flannans that supported the lighthouse was itself named *Eilean Mòr*, or “Big Island” in Gaelic.

The word *Col* is best translated as a gulf, valley or trough.

Thus *Muir Col* refers to a large trough between two waves. It has recently been discovered that rogue waves are real and can reach heights of 100 feet or more, and seem to be the explanation for ships found at sea with no crew aboard, or ships missing without a trace. Such waves are said to consist of an almost vertical wall of water preceded by a trough so deep that it has been referred to as a “hole in the sea.”

Niall Beag’s expression *Muir Col* appears to be a very early term for what we now call rogue waves.

But others argue it could not have been a wave that caused the disappearance of these three unfortunate men.

It was December of 1900 when this trio was left behind on the lighthouse island to tend the light through the coming winter. The lighthouse was built over a four-year period and first went into operation a year earlier, on December 7, 1899. Oddly, the foreman of the construction also died an untimely death as did a later keeper,

meaning five men related to the lighthouse died in a four-year period.

On December 15, 1900, a passing ship noticed the light was out. The trio had only been on the island a few days. There appear to be two logs, one which is a mundane log of daily activity, and another, thought to be a forgery, which details the emotions of the men as they were surrounded by a winter storm. In it is mentioned crying, praying, and aggravated personalities. None of this later log jives with the notion of hardened seamen who perhaps were fighting for their very lives.

The more acceptable log records that the light was extinguished on the morning of the 15th and prepared for the next night’s operation.

The inside of the lighthouse had been cleaned, including the breakfast dishes. While two sets of rain gear were missing, a third was found hanging neatly on the rack. It was the policy that one man always stayed inside the lighthouse. It appears it was MacArthur’s rain gear, so something led him to leave the safety of the lighthouse without it.



*Flannan lighthouse interior*

At the east landing, everything was intact, but the west landing provided considerable evidence of damage caused by recent storms. A box 108 feet above sea level had been broken and its contents strewn about; iron railings were bent over, the iron railway by the path was wrenched out of its concrete, and a rock weighing over a ton had been displaced above that. On top of the cliff, at over 200 feet above sea level, turf had

been ripped away as far as 33 feet from the cliff edge. If it was a *Muir Col* that took the lives of these men, it seems it would have been over 200 feet high! Even if the turf was ripped off by wind, the ton rock was above the 108-foot mark. The wave would have to be higher than this to have the power to move the rock. It is estimated that this particular *Muir Col* would have to be 120 to 200 feet in height, something not typically recorded in maritime history.

But it could happen! In 1958, a tsunami with a record run-up height of 1720 feet occurred in Lituya Bay, Alaska, due to the collapse of a wall of rock caused by an earthquake. However, there was no earthquake or rock slide to cause the 1900 *Muir Col*, unless it was simply the build-up of conflicting waves during a ferocious winter storm in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

In Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's 1912 ballad, "Flannan Isle," the lyrics refer to an uneaten meal laid out on the table, indicating that the keepers had been suddenly disturbed:

Yet, as we crowded through the door,  
We only saw a table spread  
For dinner, meat, and cheese and bread;  
But, all untouched; and no-one there,  
As though, when they sat down to eat,  
Ere they could even taste,  
Alarm had come, and they in haste  
Had risen and left the bread and meat,  
For at the table head a chair  
Lay tumbled on the floor.

It is true that a chair was overturned, but the table and dishes had been cleaned up as reported by the first man on the scene after the disappearance. Robert Muirhead, the superintendent, arrived on the island on December 29th, and reported:

From evidence which I was able to procure I was satisfied that the men had been on duty up till dinner time on Saturday the 15th of December, that they had gone down to secure a box in which the mooring

ropes, landing ropes, etc., were kept, and which was secured in a crevice in the rock about 110 feet above sea level, and that an extra large sea had rushed up the face of the rock, had gone above them, and coming down with immense force, had swept them completely away.

Gibson's poem wasn't the only time the facts would be blurred. Songs, poems and stories have been written about the incident with a wide variety of theories cited. Researchers have attributed the tale of the missing men to ghosts from an ancient burial ground on the island; to a sea monster; to the murder of two of the men by a third; and even to UFOs.



*The Flannan lighthouse with the remains of St. Flannan's chapel in the foreground*

Another plausible theory was put forth in 1995, which offers an alternative idea for the demise of the keepers. The coastline of Eilean Mòr is deeply indented with narrow gullies called geos. The west landing, which is situated in such a geo, terminates in a cave. In high seas or storms, water would rush into the cave and then explode out again with considerable force. It is speculated that MacArthur may have seen a series of large waves approaching the island, and knowing the likely danger to his colleagues, ran down to warn them, only to be swept away with his fellow workers. This theory has the advantages of explaining the overturned chair, and the set of rain gear remaining indoors.

Whatever the explanation, the Flannan lighthouse disappearance remains one of Scotland's greatest maritime mysteries.

by  
Victoria Roberts  
USA

# Scotland The Spooky

ABOVE: Public domain photo of the courtyard of Castle Fraser.  
AT RIGHT: Edinburgh Castle as photographed from afar by our favorite “camera man,” Cameron Morrison.

It’s that time of year again – the *Celtic Guide’s* Halloween issue! This is my favorite time of year because it’s this *Celtic Guide* author’s birthday. Yep, Halloween, October 31st. No, I’m not joking. Please keep the witch jokes to yourself. I’ve heard them all.

We’ve read in past issues about *Samhain* and all the customs and superstitions that go along with it. I thought to make this a spooktacular issue by writing about some of the most haunted places in Scotland—allegedly, of course. After all, who doesn’t like a good scare at this time of year, right? Here are a few of those places in no particular order. Have you been to any of these?

## Edinburgh Castle

This doesn’t surprise me at all. The castle housed many monarchs in the past, including Queen Margaret and King David II, who had died in the castle. Mary, Queen of Scots gave birth to James VI, in 1566, within the stone walls. If only those walls could talk...



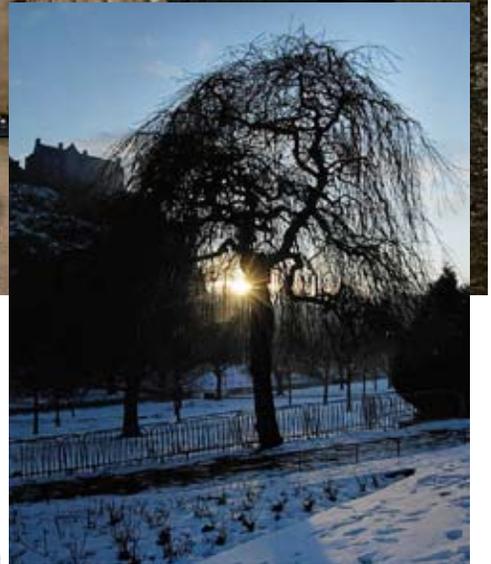
But perhaps they do and we merely need to listen. Between battles, executions, and even a brief capture by the English, I’d be surprised if Edinburgh Castle wasn’t among the most haunted venues in Scotland.

## Dryburgh Abbey Hotel

I wrote an article a few months ago about past life at Dryburgh Abbey. The Dryburgh Abbey Hotel is said to be haunted by the Grey Lady. The mysterious woman supposedly drowned herself after her lover was murdered. Rumor has it the man was a monk at the now-ruined Dryburgh Abbey. Care to spend the night?

## Edinburgh Vaults

A series of chambers forms nineteen arches under South Bridge. The vaults were used for storage to house many illicit materials from



taverns, cobblers, etc. In one of my past articles, I wrote a story about Burke and Hare, two serial killers who used their victims for medical experiments. Allegedly, some of the duo's bodies were disposed of there.

*Ghost Adventures* even filmed an episode in the Edinburgh Vaults and reported paranormal activity. I saw that episode and it was pretty creepy.

Being that my daughter recently saw the movie *As Above, So Below* and had nightmares, I think I'll pass on this one. Treading around in the dark and underground is not on my bucket list.

### Castle Fraser

The castle sits on 300 acres in Aberdeenshire. Legend tells of a young princess that was brutally murdered there. Her body was dragged down the stone staircase, leaving a trail of blood stains. The castle occupants could not scrub out the stains, so they were forced to cover the steps in wood paneling, which remains today.

"Out, damn'd spot! Out, I say!"

### Ardrossan Castle

The castle is situated on Scotland's west coast and is said to be haunted by the ghost of William Wallace, who wanders around the ruins on stormy nights. But William Wallace is not the only legend there. Ardrossan Castle is also associated with the Devil. Sir Fergus Barclay was a famous horseman known for his tremendous skill.

Want to know his secret? Barclay was given a magical bridle by the Devil in exchange for his soul. But Barclay was clever. He tricked the Devil into giving him back his soul. In turn, the Devil attacked the castle, and it's said he left his hoofprints behind on one of the rocks. Although I wouldn't mind encountering the ghost of William Wallace, I don't exactly fancy meeting the Devil any time soon.

They say the veil between the living and the dead is thinnest on *Samhain*. Where will you be? Wandering around the windswept moors seeking William Wallace, or sleeping in a haunted castle? Me? I'll be home passing out candy to trick-or-treaters.

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# Na diabhal léim

by Greg Emerick  
USA

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As the day begins to fade on All Hallow's Eve,  
tempt not your fate, heed my words and believe.

For the night is warm, but feels so cold,  
likely from hearing, the legends of old.

For 't'was on this night, centuries ago,  
that began this unending tale of woe.

Those who were there and witnessed the scene,  
saw them doomed to eternity as the "in between".

Nevermore to breathe, love or laugh,  
it was said their lives were cut in half.

The evil which came on Hallowe'en night,  
was here bringing more than just a mere fright.

Spirits of darkness from ancient times past,  
were sent here relentlessly, with spells to cast.

Curses and incantations in the dark they did hurl.  
So frighteningly evil, your very hair would curl.

'Twas the devil himself, ol' Beelzebub their king,  
who sent them forth on foot, horseback and wing.

Diabolically evil and simple was his plan,  
to send to perdition, souls, as fast as he can.

Hallowe'en was the only time it could work,  
for on this night all manner of evil did lurk.

Hiding in the shadows or behind a wall,  
seeking the unsuspecting, making them fall.

High on the bluff, up near the sea cliff,  
the sky was stormy, the breeze became stiff.

Amongst the stones he saw they were dancing,  
filled with drink, singing and some were romancing.

To many, harmless and benign this scene might look,  
not for the devil, it was an opportunity, which he soon took.

These folks still adhered to the old religion and ways,  
believing that Hallowe'en was one of their high holy days.

Not knowing a gate opened 'twixt that day and its night,  
they did as they chose, without a care if it be right.

Plied with both liquor and an old secret potion,  
dimmed was their reason, but aroused was their emotion.

He had them where he wanted them, right in his grasp,  
they crafted their own cage, whilst he locked the hasp.

Unwittingly or not, these good folk took the bait,  
choosing never-ending sorrow as their soon-to-be fate.

High on the cliff above the thundering sea,  
right at the edge is where he led them to be.

Still, some say it was the drink, some say his voice.  
But there is no question, it was always their choice.

Sixty-six souls that night leapt to their death,  
smashed on the rocks and drawing no breath.

'Tis said that they are yet here, trapped as ghosts,  
lingering hither and yon, near the granite signpost.

The signpost is carved "Na diabhal léim " into the stone,  
and it's said when the night is dark, the very cliff will moan.

For it knows full well the count of lost souls,  
with the bedrock and boulders playing their roles.

Every Hallowe'en night you'll find me here,  
on the edge of the cliff, but I have no fear.

For I was one of the many, over two centuries ago,  
wishing I knew then, that which now, I do know.

No compassion is needed, nor any pity,  
I chose my own fate and it will never be pretty.

When you're near the sea and hear a voice upon the air,  
worry not, it's only me warning you now, to quickly beware.

If you are foolish and do that which I've done,  
remember there is no ghost or banshee you can outrun!

Hallowe'en can be happy and filled with much laughter,  
but watch, when the sun goes down, for what comes after.

Scarecrows, pumpkins and a witch on a broom,  
might be harmless, or could spell your doom.

The Hallowe'en gateway opens just once each year,  
be clever, forewarned, and you won't live in fear.

by Liam O Shea  
Ireland



POSTCARDS  
FROM  
OBIE

*Here is our trusty mascot, Obie, at Kilcrea Castle, County Cork, Ireland. Kilcrea Castle and its Friary, which is in the next field, have had a troubled and violent history. Both were built by Cormac MacCarthy (of the same family that built Blarney Castle and Carrigaphoooca Castle). Cormac was murdered by his brother Owen and is buried in the Abbey.*

*In addition to the McCarthy family, there are other famous burials here including Thomas O'Herlahy, Catholic Bishop of Ross, and the famous Airt Ó Laoghaire or Art O'Leary.*

*The Abbey was plundered and sacked by the English in 1584, but, in 1597, it was granted back to the MacCarthy family.*

*Obie and I walk this area often, as is not far from my home. There is certainly an eerie feeling about this place on a misty September morning.*

# Clotted Scream!

by Pollyanna Jones  
England



## Terrifying Tales From Cornwall

Like a jagged finger on a gnarled hand, the kingdom of Cornwall juts outwards from the southwest of England, pointing accursedly at the Atlantic Ocean and those countless souls that lost their lives to the fickle sea. Shipwrecks, smugglers, devils, and giants, the tales from this region have them all. On a dark night, the Cornish folk would gather around their hearths and tell each other stories as dark as the shadows that flitted around their cottages in the dim firelight.

Stories were used to give warning to the eager fisherman who set sail in bad weather, or to the wayward traveller making his way across the headland alone. Was that sound a daemon approaching, or just the wind howling through the treetops? Did that church bell toll the hour, or knell the approaching doom of an unfortunate soul? And what was that lantern glimmer on the cliffs over yonder? Come closer, reader, and hear some folklore from the Celtic land of Cornwall that will haunt you forever.

### THE GUMP

Woon Gumpus Common, near St. Just, is littered with standing stones and burial sites. One of these is *Chûn Quoit*, shown above.

Over the years, imaginations have run riot with stories of the spirits and piskies that claim this land as their own. The wights are the least of your worries though, if you're ever caught out on The Gump at night.

Joseph Blight in 1861 wrote of old half-starved horses that wander the common. Likely set loose by their former owners, the poor beasts ended their days struggling an existence on the moors. All matted fur and ribs and rolling eyes, it is no wonder that they were said to be ridden by the greatest of fiends at night. The Devil himself would take to riding these mares, in a crazed hunt to catch souls. His captives would be taken back with him to hell. Men would flee him, and catch themselves against a stile. Unable to climb over in time, they were doomed. In Cornish folklore,

the Devil is believed to frequently use this tactic, in an attempt to catch souls before they reach the consecrated grounds of a church.

The ancient landscape of this area was avoided by any travelling at night-time. Strictly sticking to the roads, or better still, avoiding travel altogether, The Gump was haunted by the spirits of those sinful people that dwelt in the land before the arrival of Christianity. Unable to enter heaven, these wights were a fearful encounter, and no living man wanted to draw their attention upon himself.

### MINE HAUNTINGS

Tin mining was an important part of the Cornish economy, and throughout the region the ruins of ventilation chimneys and engine houses can still be seen. In these dark claustrophobic places deep beneath the earth, danger was ever present. Collapses, flooding, falls, and gas, were hazards that the tin-miners faced every day. It was no wonder that there were accidents.

Polbreen Mine, near St Agnes' beacon, is haunted by the ghost of a lady who threw herself down a mine shaft in some fit of grief one night. Named Dorcas, the restless spirit would distract the miners, calling them by name. There are few accounts of sightings, but there are reports of her tearing the clothes off a man's back, or throwing rocks at her chosen victims.



*Ruins of a Cornish tin mine*

In mines of several districts, a much-feared phantom hand has been seen. Some accounts describe how this disembodied hand carries a

lantern; others describe how it holds a candle, pinched between finger and thumb. Known as the Dead Hand, it is a portent of ill-fortune to any that see it, and to superstitious miners was a warning that an accident in the tin mines would soon befall them.

### THE IRISH LADY



*Pedn-mên-du, AKA The Irish Lady*

Sennen Cove, near Land's End features a geological feature named *Pedn-mên-du*, which in Cornish means "the headland of black rock". This rock earned the nickname of The Irish Lady. A tragic tale explains its origins.

During the reign of Charles I, there was a great upheaval in British society. Many Irish Protestants were allegedly massacred by Catholics, although atrocities were committed by the other side, too. A ship filled with fleeing Protestants was making its way to Bristol from Ireland, when one night, it was caught in a storm and smashed against the rocks just east of Land's End.

As the sun rose in the morning, the extent of the tragedy was revealed. The bodies of the drowned were washed up on the shore, along with the flotsam and jetsam of the splintered boat.

But there seemed to be one survivor. Clinging to a rock in the furious seas was a woman. The waves pounded against her, but she clung on for dear life, desperately calling for help.

Days and nights passed, but the people of Sennen Cove were unable to rescue this survivor. The seas were too rough, the waves too high. To cast off into those waters would be suicide. All they could do was watch helplessly as the poor woman finally succumbed to her ordeal. A week later, her body was pulled out of the water.

According to Joseph Blight, the fishermen of this locality say that the ghost of the drowned lady, with a rose in her mouth, is still often seen sitting on the rock.

### **RILLATON BARROW**

Now here comes a curious tale. Folklore told of a rock on Bodmin Moor, known as the Druid's Chair near the village of Linkinhorne. Whenever a hunter chanced upon this lonely spot, a Druid would offer him a drink from a golden cup. This miraculous goblet could never be emptied, and

it became a challenge for the local hunters to see who could down its contents.

After attempting to guzzle the Druid's brew, one particular hunter became so angered that he snatched the goblet and galloped away across the Moor. Perhaps at the will of the Druid, his horse fell and the hunter broke his neck. He was buried on the spot and his cup with him.

In 1837, a nearby barrow, said to be the grave of this hunter, was opened up and was found to contain the body of a man. Buried with him was a gold beaker, dated to the Bronze Age. Known as the Rillaton Cup, this marvellous treasure is now housed in the British Museum. It seems that the folklore around the mound predicted the grave and its burial goods.

**see more of Pollyanna's work at:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/Pollysfolly?ref=hl>



*The Cheesewring, home of the Druid's Chair on Bodmin Moor*

# The Grey/Black Lady of the Isle of Man

by Jim McQuiston  
USA



*Castle Rushen, Isle of Man*

Castle Rushen is located on the Celtic Isle of Man. It is a holdover from medieval days when the island nation was ruled by the Vikings. The castle is now a Manx Heritage Site. It was also used as a prison for many years and executions were held there until 1872.

The novelist and children's author Catherine Crowe (c.1800-1876) published *The Night Side of Nature* in two volumes, in 1848. This lively collection of ghostly sketches and anecdotes was a Victorian best-seller and Crowe's most popular work. Sixteen editions appeared in six years, and it was translated into several European languages.

One of her stories relates the experience of a man who saw what she described as "The Black Lady of Castle Rushen."

In most modern sightings of this spirit, she is known as the Grey Lady.

The disparity in color may simply be due to the fact that the gentleman had his experience with the apparition at night, while many others who have purported to see her, had their visions in the daytime.

Regardless, enough people have claimed to have seen her that even Ghost Hunters International did a show and investigation at the castle back in 2011.

Let's first hear Crowe's tale and then we'll look at some more modern evidence.

## **The Black Lady Of Castle Rushen**

A mighty bustle they also make of an apparition which they say haunts Castle Rushen in the form of a woman who was some years since executed for the murder of her child. I have heard not only persons who have been confined there for debt, but also the soldiers of the garrison, affirm that they have seen it various times; but what I took most notice of was a report of a gentleman, of whose understanding as well as veracity, I have a very great opinion. He told me, that, happening to be abroad late one night and caught in an excessive storm of wind and rain, he saw a woman stand before the castle gate, where being not the least shelter, it surprised him, that anybody,

much less one of that sex, should not have run to some little porch or shed, of which there are several in Castletown, than chose to stand still, exposed and alone, to such a dreadful tempest. His curiosity exciting him to draw nearer that he might discover who it was that seemed so little to regard the fury of the elements. He perceived that she retreated on his approach, and at last, he thought, went into the castle, though the gates were shut; this obliged him to think he has seen a spirit, sent him home very much terrified, but the next day, relating his adventure to some people who lived in the castle and describing, as near as he could, the garb and stature of the apparition, they told him that it was that of the woman above mentioned, who had been frequently seen by the soldiers on guard, to pass in and out of the gates, as well as to walk through the rooms, though there were no visible means to enter.

The story of the Black or Grey Lady has been further explained in other publications. It seems she was executed for the murder of her son, who was later found to have died of natural causes, although how this was determined is still a mystery.

In 1972, the curator of the museum which now stands on this site, admitted he had never seen the ghost woman, though he had heard directly from others who had. One of the guards of the castle reported seeing her standing near the drawbridge, which is one of the most often cited locations for her appearance. She was there with her son, but as the guard approached to collect their tickets for the tour, they vanished in front of him.

In 1960, a group of young people handed this same curator a signed affidavit that they had seen the Grey Lady atop the Eagle Tower area of the castle. Still another sighting was attributed to the wife of the warden back when the castle was still a prison. She said she had

seen the ghost twice, once at the drawbridge and once near the dungeon where she was held awaiting her execution.

It is said the Grey/Black Lady experienced so much sorrow from losing her son, and then being accused of his murder, that a part of her remains at the castle, still grieving.

Another book from 1868 also refers to this apparition as the Black Lady. The book is *Poems from Manxland*, authored by Elizabeth Cookson.

In the book, Cookson reproduces a poem entitled "The Black Lady of Castle Rushen," which we reprint selections from below –

To guilty souls, oppressed with fears  
The very walls have eyes and ears,  
And stones a voice to cry.  
No marvel then that haunted brain  
Should oft-times hear a phantom chain,  
Hear a low phantom sigh.

Thus long ago, a story went  
Of how, upon the battlement  
Of Castle Rushen stood  
A lady, all in black arrayed,  
Who unto death had been betrayed  
In prime of womanhood.

Tw'as said, "that sin so sorely press'd,  
It could not in the churchyard rest,  
By crime beguiled."  
For one, who to her wealth was heir  
Before our Deemsters three did swear  
She'd murdered her own child.

And all who in that hour of need  
Beheld her bow like broken reed,  
Still saw her face uprise  
When darkness fell – in spectral light  
It loomed upon the cheek of night  
With sad, reproachful eyes.

And from that day forward, the tale of the Grey/Black Lady of the Isle of Man lives on and is retold to visitors of Castle Rushen . . . and by those who see her still.

by Jim McQuiston  
USA

# The White Lady of Scotland

*Neidpath Castle, Peebles, Scotland*

Neidpath Castle is a rubble-built tower house, overlooking the River Tweed and located about one mile west of the royal burgh of Peebles, Scotland.

Though Peebles is located in the Borders, it still commemorates its Celtic past, especially with its annual festival, which celebrates Beltane.

Cromwell's forces damaged the castle in 1650, and it suffered further neglect, so that by 1790, the upper stories of the wing had collapsed.

Neidpath Castle is now closed to the public, however, in the past it was visited by Mary, Queen of Scots, her son James VI, by William Wordsworth and by Sir Walter Scott, among others.

Adam Ferguson, a Scottish philosopher and historian of the Scottish Enlightenment, actually lived at the castle for awhile.

Sir Walter Scott memorialized the castle when he wrote about a female apparition known as the White Lady, who had apparently been seen floating about.

The story goes that this woman was the daughter of the Earl of March, who at one point owned the castle. This unfortunate young lady fell in love with a local laird's son. Though he was heir to a small estate, Lord March felt the boy was not a good enough suitor for his daughter.

The young lad left the country to make his fortune, hoping to return someday as a better mate for the girl. She, in turn, became very ill from her love being away.

Her health worsened just as the young suitor returned to Neidpath. Lord March had her bed moved to a balcony from which she could see the lad riding through the valley below, in hopes her health would return.

As he rode by, the young man did not recognize the sickly girl, despite her desperate waves to him. He passed by and she passed away . . . from a broken heart.

Through the years she appeared before visitors of the castle as the White Lady. The castle still seems to exude an unnatural atmosphere for those who dare get close.

by Jim McQuiston  
USA

# The Blue Lady of Ireland



*Sharon House or Sharon Glebe, Donegal, Ireland*

The above estate, a 200-year-old+ country mansion worth €1.3 million, was severely damaged in March of 2014 by fire. It began life as the Donegal Rectory and was known, for years, as Sharon House. More recently, after extensive renovations, it became known as Sharon Glebe.

The estate was the scene of a gruesome double murder which took place 217 years ago. Down through the ages, rumours of a ghost known as the Blue Lady have persisted. She is believed to be the spirit of Mrs. Waller, one of the two people killed on a dark and stormy night.

Our story begins in March of 1797, when the Reverend Dr. Hamilton, Rector of Fannet Parish, County Donegal, came knocking on the rectory doors. He was a very prominent man and was active in bringing to justice what he felt were rebels known as the United Irishmen. The group, made up of Catholics AND Presbyterians, were trying to free Ireland, and marked Hamilton as an enemy, relentlessly pursuing him.

On that fateful night, Hamilton was on his way to Londonderry to form a regiment of soldiers to put down the rebellion in his part of

the county. During those troubled days, it would have been foolish to travel alone and unarmed, so he traveled with a servant, two horses and two pistols.

As the weather worsened, Hamilton decided to stop at Sharon House to see his friend, Dr. Waller, who was rector of the local parish and shared the house with his wife and a servant. Also present, that evening, were two nieces.

The Wallers were happy to see Dr. Hamilton and asked him to stay overnight.

As the group visited, suddenly, the muzzle of a gun broke through a window of the room in which the group was sitting. The men outside wanted “bloodthirsty Hamilton!”

In the ensuing gunfire, both Mrs. Waller and Mr. Hamilton were killed.

Another couple eventually purchased the house and remodeled it. Over the first several months, the Blue Lady appeared many times. *Ghost Hunters* filmed an investigation at the site, but it appears that, after a seance was held, the Blue Lady has finally rested . . . **or not!**

It was March when she was killed and March when the fire broke out – 217 years later.

by Jim McQuiston  
USA

# The Green Lady of Wales

*Caerphilly Castle, South Wales*

Caerphilly Castle dates back to the 13th century and is located in South Wales. It is surrounded by a magnificent moat, which extends into local wetlands. The castle ranks as the second largest in all of Britain. It is so classic-looking it has been used for both movie and television on-location productions.

Caerphilly Castle was built by Gilbert de Clare, and it is home to a restless spirit known as the Green Lady.

According to many sources, Gilbert was married to a beautiful French princess, Alice of Angoulême – a lady of refined tastes and a passionate nature, who didn't take much to her husband's warlike personality.

She was flirtatious and is said to have had an affair with her own first cousin, Edward, who would later become King Edward I of England.

One day, Gruffudd the Fair, the Prince of Brithdir, visited Caerphilly Castle. The princess was very much attracted to this handsome Welsh prince, and soon the two

were lovers. For some odd reason, Gruffudd confessed their secret love affair to a monk, who turned out to be an informant. Gilbert became very upset and sent his unfaithful wife back to France. Then he ordered his men to hunt down Gruffudd.

Meanwhile, learning of the monk's betrayal, Gruffudd captured the holy man and hung him from a tree at a site now known as "Monk's Vale"

Gilbert de Clare's men, in turn, captured Gruffudd, and he too was hung from a tree, after which a message was sent to France telling Alice of the fate of her lover. It is said she dropped dead on the spot.

And so it is her ghost that has haunted Caerphilly Castle since that day. She is often seen in a richly-woven dress, colored green to match Gilbert's envy, thus her name – the Green Lady.

Locals say that on moonlit nights Alice of Angoulême appears on the walls of Caerphilly Castle, searching in vain for her lost lover.

by Alison Macrae  
Canada

# Samhainn Traditions



In the ancient Celtic culture, *Samhainn* was a festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter or the darker half of the year. It is the pagan root of Halloween and is celebrated from sunset October 31st to sunset November 1st. This festival was observed in Scotland, Ireland, and The Isle Of Man.

In modern Scottish Gaelic the name is *Samhainn/Samhuinn*, in modern Irish *Samhain*, in Manx Gaelic *Sauin*. These names all come from the old Irish *samain*, *samuin* or *samfuin*, all referring to November 1st (*latha na samma*, *samhain* day), and the festival and royal assembly held on that date in medieval Ireland.

Feasts were held to which the souls of dead kin were beckoned to attend, and a place was set at the table for them. Mumming and guising were part of the festival and involved people going door to door in costume or in disguise, often reciting verses in exchange for food. The costumes may have been a way of imitating or disguising oneself.

Since the latter 20th century, Celtic Neo-Pagans and Wiccans have observed *Samhainn*.

I know that the tradition of carving the turnip is long gone, and I might add it was not easy to carve a turnip and put the candle in it. Now, for Halloween time, the modern world has had an effect on these customs. Also a pumpkin is so much easier on which to carve beautiful faces, as can be seen in the photo above.

While I was growing up in Scotland, the only pumpkin I ever saw was in the flicks (movies).

Our tradition was to learn a poem or act out a skit. When you went around to the neighbours, you could do this and get your treat. We always shouted out at the door, “Trick or Treat.” During this period of time, folks loved to hear ghost stories being told. I do not remember many houses being very decorated as they are today. Once inside the house, you had to perform. You might even get to dunk for apples (with your hands tied behind your back, of course) or try for sticky treacle scones hanging on a string (also with your hands tied). Now that was a messy treat to get, and you usually got to put your face back in the basin to wash it.

The poem I told was always the same throughout the years. Once I had learned it, I loved to recite it. It was “Wee Willie Winkie.”

This is a Scottish nursery rhyme and was a favourite of mine. It was written and published by William Miller around the year 1841. Here are a few verses of it:

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the toon,  
Up stairs an’ doon stairs in his nicht-gown,  
Tirlin’ at the window, crying at the lock,  
“Are the weans in their bed,  
for it’s now ten o’clock?”  
Hey, Willie Winkie, are you comin’ ben?  
The cat’s singin grey thrums to the sleepin hen,  
The dog’s speldert on the floor  
and disna gie a cheep,  
But here’s a waukrife laddie,  
that wunna fa’ asleep.”  
Onything but sleep, you rogue,  
glow’ring like the moon,  
Rattlin’ in an airn jug wi’ an airn spoon  
Rumblin’ tumblin’ roon about,  
crawin’ like a cock,  
Skirlin like a kenna-what  
waukenin’ sleepin’ fock.



*The pumpkins in the photo on the previous page were hand-carved by my grandchildren, a tradition they still do each year. The photo above shows how the grandkids used to take my dog out with them trick or treating.*

Another poem that was popular was “Halloween,” written in 1785 by Robert Burns. Here are a some verses from this poem:

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,  
 “Will ye go wi’ me, graunie?  
 I’ll eat the apple at the glass \*  
 I gat frae Uncle Johnie.”

She fuff’t her pipe wi’ sic a lunt,  
 In wrath, she was sae vap’rin,  
 She notic’t na an aizle brunt  
 Her brow, new, worsset apron

Out thro’ that night.  
 “Ye little skelpie-limmer’s face!  
 I daur you try sic sportin.  
 As seek the foul thief ony place,

For him to spae your fortune.  
 Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!  
 Great cause ye hae to fear it.  
 For money a ane has gotten a fright,  
 An’ liv’d an died deleerit,  
 On sic a night.

\* The reference to “I’ll eat the apple at the glass” is described in this way: Take a candle and go alone to a looking glass and eat an apple before it. Some traditions say you should comb your hair all the time, while looking in the mirror, and the face of your romantic companion will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

Nowadays, a large *Samhainn* festival gathers in Edinburgh. It is a yearly event and lights up the Royal Mile with torchlight from the Castle Esplanade to Cathedral Square. It goes from 9pm to 11pm on October 31st. This event usually takes around two months of planning. Seems a long time for a two-hour event. There are 190 people, mostly volunteers, who help put this parade together. My, how magnificent it would be to watch this parade.



*Grampa and the grandkids ready for Halloween*

# Omen of Death

## A Brief Look At The Irish Banshee

by Gregory Schipp  
USA

In Ireland, the banshee is a creature of old myth that is seen as an omen of death. In popular folklore, the banshee would wail whenever the death of a person was at hand. There are many different descriptions of what the banshee looks like. In some accounts, she is described as a beautiful woman with long golden hair and a white dress. Others describe her as a loathsome old hag with fiery eyes. In Ireland, the banshee is often referred to as *an bhean sí*, later anglicized as banshee.<sup>1</sup> The banshee is described in different terms in different parts of Ireland. In counties Carlow, Wicklow, and Waterford, she is referred to as *badhbh*. In Kilkenny, she is referred to as *badhbh chaointe* or *badhbh chaointeacháin*. In east Limerick, she is known as *bean an chaointe*.<sup>2</sup>

There are many other folk beliefs of the banshee's origin. Some believe that a professional keener, a woman who was employed to cry at wakes and funerals, would become a banshee in death. Another belief was that keeners that did not carry out their duties became banshees after death, wailing for those who were about to die. Another theory was that children that were not baptized were to become banshees after death.<sup>3</sup>

The appearance of the banshee in folk tradition usually varies. Most accounts describe the banshee as a young woman with long hair and a flowing dress, sometimes white or red. In one account, she was described as a small woman, about the size of a doll, with long red hair, a white dress and red shoes. Sometimes she is seen combing her hair while lamenting for the dead.<sup>4</sup> When the banshee came, her cry would often be described as a mournful cry or a high-pitched wail.



*Bunworth Banshee, "Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland,"*  
by Thomas Crofton Croker, 1825

Those visited by the banshee say that when she visits, she would cry three times before disappearing.<sup>5</sup> Whenever she appears, it is often at the family's house, even if the dying family member is not at home, though she never makes herself present within the room of the dying person.<sup>6</sup> There is connection between the banshee and family, particularly those with surnames that start with O' or Mac.<sup>7</sup> The banshees have also been given personal names. The O'Brien family banshee, *Aoibhell*, resides in county Clare. The Fitzgerald banshee by the name of *Áine* inhabits the hill of Knockainey. The McCarthy banshee, *Clíona*, lives in Carraig Chlíona in County Cork.<sup>8</sup>

If one were to look deeper, one can see that the banshee can also be connected to Irish mythology. The term *bean shí* has had many different interpretations. According to John Gregorson Campbell in his book, *The Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, the term *bean shíth* means "woman of the peace"<sup>9</sup> or "Elle woman".

The word *síth*, in Scottish Gaelic and Irish, means “peace”. The Scots and Irish would often refer to fairies as “people of the peace”, “still folk”, and “silently-moving people”.<sup>10</sup>

In Charles Squire’s book, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, Squire’s definition of the banshee, known as *bean sídhe*, means “woman of the hill”. In Squire’s book, every goddess in Irish myth is referred to as a *bean sídhe*, just as every fairy or god is referred to as *fer sídhe*.<sup>11</sup> In Irish myth, the Tuatha Dé Danann were said to inhabit these hills or mounds. Each god was given their own dwelling to live in, which was called a *sídhe*.<sup>12</sup> These *sídh*es were barrows or hillocks that became doors to the Celtic Otherworld. In one story, Richard De Clare in 1318 was marching against the O’Deas in Dysert when they came to the River Fergus. De Clare and his men spotted the grisly sight of a hag washing armor and clothes covered in gore. When asked who she was, she replied that she was the “Water Doleful One” who resided in the green fairy mounds.<sup>13</sup>

As we look further, we can see that these supernatural women were in fact viewed as goddesses at one point in time before becoming foreboders of death in later tradition. The Fitzgerald banshee, *Áine*, who resides in Knockainy, is the queen of South Munster in Irish mythology and is the goddess of prosperity and abundance. On Saint John’s Eve, villagers would carry burning bunches of hay or straw upon poles to the top of Knockainy and would wave these poles over the crops as part of a fertility ritual for the coming year.<sup>14</sup> In later tradition, *Áine* serves as a death foreboder for the Fitzgerald family.<sup>15</sup> The goddess *Clíona*, who inhabits Carraig Chlíona, is tributary queen of Munster and a principal Otherworld figure in the Munster province. In later tradition, she serves as a banshee. She is recorded in a contemporary lament of a bishop of Cork in 1726. She is depicted as wringing her hands and her hair hanging long and loose in sorrow.<sup>16</sup> *Aoibhell*, who was the territorial goddess of east Clare, was said to have forewarned Brian Boru’s death during the Battle of Clontarf.<sup>17</sup>

There is a strong connection between these land goddesses and aristocracy. In Old Irish literature, the death of a king is prophesized by a woman who has a connection to him.<sup>18</sup> While most of the time she is seen as a messenger of death, there are times when she is the driving force behind an unjust king’s downfall. They usually appear in the stories as either a beautiful woman or as an old hag. In one tale, there is a hag called *Badhbh*, who causes Cormac Conn Loingeas to break his taboos and warns him of his fate in the guise of the grisly “washer at the ford”.<sup>19</sup> It is stressed that these sovereignty goddesses serve more than just prophets of death. They are also symbols of ancestral sovereignty. For example, the Eoganacht family had claimed its right to kingship in Munster by using *Áine* as a symbol of family ancestry and sovereignty. The Geraldines also used *Áine* as a symbol of sovereignty to legitimize their claim over the territory of Desmond.<sup>20</sup>

In modern Irish folk tradition, the banshee often comes in the form of a bird. According to Patricia Lysaght, a *badhbh* in the form of a bird represents death in Old Irish literature.<sup>21</sup> The idea of the banshee as a bird is connected to the Morrígan. The Morrígan, the Irish goddess of war, is known for taking on the form of a “hoodie” or carrion crow when a battle was raging.<sup>22</sup> The Morrígan would inspire warriors into a battle fury. Charles Squire provides a poem about the Morrígan as she incites a warrior:

“Over his head is shrieking  
A lean hag, quickly hopping  
Over the points of the weapons and shields;  
She is the gray-haired Morrígu”<sup>23</sup>

The Morrígan has shown the characteristics of a banshee in old Irish literature. In the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*, the Morrígan appears before the opposing armies and speaks to both parties:

“Ravens gnawing men’s necks  
blood spurting in the fierce fray

hackled flesh, battle madness,  
 blades in bodies  
 acts of war  
 after the cloaked one's hero heat  
 in man's shape  
 he shakes to pieces  
 the men of Cruachan  
 with hacking blows  
 war is waged  
 each trampling each.  
 Hail Ulster! Woe to Ireland  
 Woe to Ulster! Hail to Ireland!"<sup>24</sup>

The speech that the Morrígan delivers is a foreboding of what was to come after the final battle between Queen Maeve's army and the Ulster defenders. In the *Cattle Raid of Regamna*, the Morrígan comes to the hero Cúchulainn in the form of a young woman who is bringing a fairy cow back from breeding with the bull of Donn of Colley. When Cuchulain intervenes, she turns into a black bird, most likely that of a crow, and warns him that he will not live more than a year.<sup>25</sup>

The origin of the banshee in Irish folklore can be traced back to the ancient pre-Christian beliefs, as there are connections between banshee and old pagan goddesses of Irish myth.

The old goddesses that were once worshipped later became the messengers of death in later tradition. Apart from being prophets of doom, they were also symbols of sovereignty for the Irish aristocracy to legitimize their claim to rule. The Irish banshee tradition today has been influenced by the old mythology of Ireland's pagan past.

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Lysaght. "Irish Banshee Traditions: A Preliminary Survey". *Béaloideas*. lml. 42/44 (1974-1976). 94

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 94

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 94-95

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 98

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 104-105

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 107

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 110

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 94

<sup>9</sup> John Gregorson Campbell. *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. (Glasgow, UK: James MacLehose and Sons. 1900). 3

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 1

<sup>11</sup> Charles Squire. *Celtic Myth and Legend*. (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books. 2001). 137

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 135

<sup>13</sup> Thos. J. Westropp. "A Folklore Survey of County Clare" *Folklore*. Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jun., 1910). 189

<sup>14</sup> Charles Squire. 245

<sup>15</sup> Sandra Billington, Miranda Green. *The Concept of the Goddess*. (New York, NY: Routledge. 1999). 158

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 159

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 158

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 160

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 160

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 158

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Lysaght. 96

<sup>22</sup> Charles Squire. 52

<sup>23</sup> Charles Squire. 52

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Kinsella, *The Tain*. (London, UK: Oxford University Press. 1970). 238

<sup>25</sup> Tom P. Cross, Clark Harris Slover. *Ancient Irish Tales*. (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co. 1936). 213 "So long as her calf shall be a yearling, so long shall thy life be"

by Carolyn Emerick  
USA  
The ARCHIVIST'S  
CORNER  
October 2014



When Owl and Witch  
together are seen  
There's mischief brewing on Halloween

Halloween is a fun and festive time of year with roots going back to Old World tradition. While some traditions have faded away, others survived and are still practiced today. In the old days, both October 31st and November 1st were considered special days. Often the eve before a holiday was the time for raucous revelry while the next morning was the time for solemn church-going. Thus, All Hallows' Eve (or evening) became Hallowe'en, and then simply Halloween. Of course, we know that before it was All Hallows, the celebration was called *Samhain* (pronounced sow-en), a Celtic pagan high day.



*Vintage Scottish Halloween greeting card*

For this edition of The Archivist's Corner, your archivist has uncovered some antiquated accounts of Celtic Halloween customs for your reading pleasure.

Douglas Holms submitted his observations of Halloween customs in Britain and Ireland to the magazine *Irish Monthly* in October of 1910:

HALLOWE'EN is the eve of Hallowmas, All Saints' Day, November the First. Much beloved, we know, by the Scots, and provocative of haggis and whiskey, and other things to which no further reference will be made in this article. It used to be regarded as the occasion when witches and devils and other mischief-making beings were abroad on their baneful midnight errands, or (more pleasantly) one on which those aeronautic folk, the fairies, hold a grand anniversary and are unusually active and unusually propitious.

Fire, apples, nuts, loom large as propitiating instruments. In the North of England it was the custom to dive for apples, or catch at them, suspended from a string, with the mouth only, the hands being tied behind the back. In the burning of nuts, common to the North of England, Ireland and Scotland, propitious omens were sought, largely concerning matrimony. The custom is well described by the poet Gay in his spell:

*Two hazel nuts I threw into the flame,  
Anid to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name.  
This with the loudest bounce me sore amaz'd,  
That in a flame of brightest colour blaz'd;  
As blaz'd the nut, so may thy passion grow,  
For 'twas thy nut that did so brightly glow!*

There was the custom common to Scotland and Wales of lighting fires. In some cases they collected the ashes from the consumed fire in the form of a circle. Then a stone was placed near the circumference for every person of each family interested, and whatever stone was out of its place upon the next morning the person represented by that stone was said to be devoted of "fey" and was supposed not to live another year.

And much more you may learn by diligent search among old world customs. "Soul-cakes," too, you ought to make and eat about this time, and perhaps you may lighten the lot of your ancestors in another place. But there, we are getting a little bit out of our depth!

Mary Julia MacCulloch explored Halloween customs on the Isle of Skye and mainland Scotland in an article in the journal *Folklore*, March 1923:

There are various festivals in the year breaking into the peaceful monotony of the crofters' existence, but the chief of these is Hallowe'en. I do not need to say that this is observed on the 31st of October, the eve of All Saints' Day. I do not also need to say that this Festival coincides

with the New Year of the Ancient Celts, the time when the sun dies. It is little wonder that the sun was an object of adoration, for even now, on the broad moors, open and bare, there is little enough of him, and what must it have been when the land was covered with the forests which have helped to form the great peat bogs.

Before Hallowe'en in all the shops there is a great display of masks, or false faces, as they are more usually called in Scotland. This is in the village, for if the country people want them, they have to walk there for them.

When the day comes, there is great preparation. All sorts of old garments are produced and there is great dressing up. This is not confined to children, for quite grown-up lads take part in it. On that night no door is closed against the "guisers." They walk into any house without knocking, and penetrate into its recesses.

I am told that in some parts the lads and young men get very riotous. There is great pulling up of cabbage stalks to see if the future partner for life is to be straight in mind and body. After these are pulled up, the youths run through the townships and play many rough pranks, throwing the cabbage stalks in at house doors, or at the windows which are frequently broken.

They are even more daring than the town lads in their raids on combustibles to make the bonfires, and byres and stables are watched lest they be stripped of their woodwork.

The girls visit the churchyard at midnight to try their fortune whether it is to be good or bad. Their future husband's wraiths are expected to appear. Samhain (the Celtic New Year) is mainly observed in the Highlands, but echoes of it linger on in the Lowlands.

Children, dressed up and with blackened faces, still come round to the doors of the houses. I wonder whether the masks are the survival of the disguising themselves as animals which was practised by the ancient Celts in the orgiastic rites at Samhain.

The children in Fife used to sing:

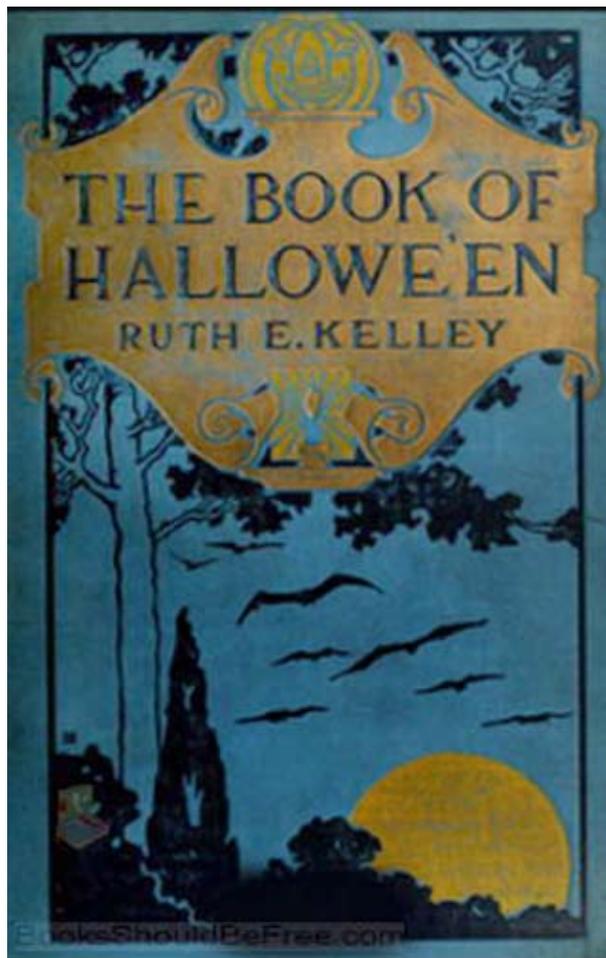
*This is the nicht o' Hallowe'en  
A' the witches are to be seen,  
Some o' them black, an' some o' them green,  
And some o' them like a randy queen!*



*Halloween Greeting Card featuring divination or scrying with a mirror, 1904*

Last but not least, Ruth Edna Kelley published *The Book of Hallowe'en* in 1919. Unfortunately, it presents some outdated misinformation, such as the notion that the Celts honored Middle Eastern god Ba'al on Samhain. Equating Northern European deities with Mediterranean gods was a common practice at the time, but is discouraged by scholars today. However, the book describes some interesting Halloween customs from various Celtic regions

and presents many traditional tales and poems. So, do I do recommend this book, but read it with a discerning eye. You can find it for free on Project Gutenberg.



Without further ado, here is an excerpt featuring Irish Halloween customs:

Ireland has a literature of Hallowe'en, or "Samhain," as it used to be called. Most of it was written between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, but the events were thought to have happened while paganism still ruled in Ireland.

The evil powers that came out at Samhain lived the rest of the time in the cave of Cruachan in Connaught, the province which was given to the wicked Fomor after the battle of Moytura. This cave was called the "hell-gate of Ireland," and was unlocked on November Eve to let out spirits and copper-colored birds which killed the farm animals. They also stole babies, leaving in

their place changelings, goblins who were old in wickedness while still in the cradle, possessing superhuman cunning and skill in music. One way of getting rid of these demon children was to ill-treat them so that their people would come for them, bringing the right ones back; or one might boil egg-shells in the sight of the changeling, who would declare his demon nature by saying that in his centuries of life he had never seen such a thing before.

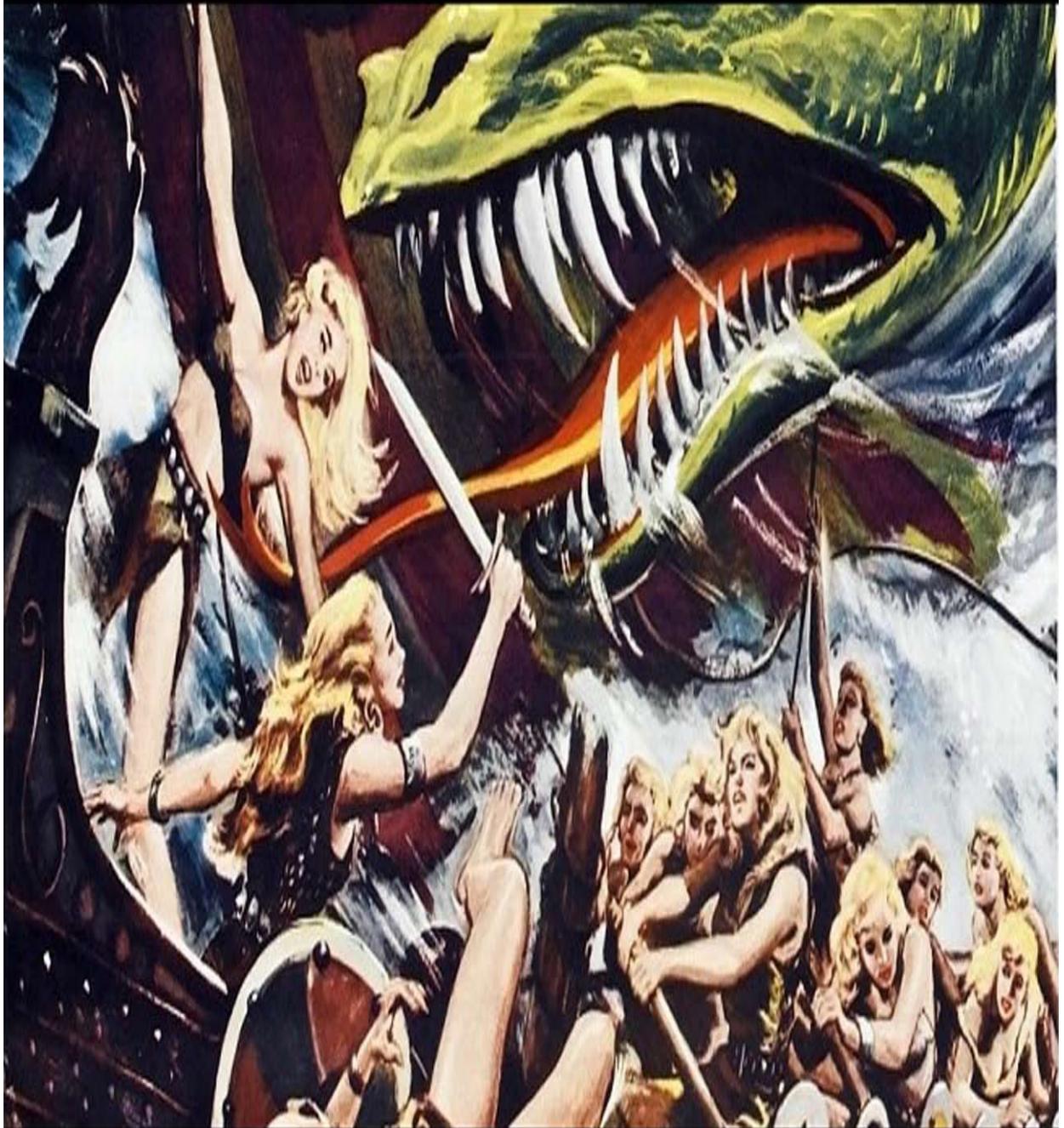
Even after Christianity was made the vital religion in Ireland, it was believed that places not exorcised by prayers and by the sign of the cross, were still haunted by Druids. As late as the fifth century the Druids kept their skill in fortune-telling. King Dathi got a Druid to foretell what would happen to him from one Hallowe'en to the next, and the prophecy came true. Their religion was now declared evil, and all evil or at any rate suspicious beings were assigned to them or to the devil as followers.

The power of fairy music was so great that St. Patrick himself was put to sleep by a minstrel who appeared to him on the day before Samhain. The Tuatha De Danann, angered at the renegade people who no longer did them honor, sent another minstrel, who after laying the ancient religious seat Tara under a twenty-three years' charm, burned up the city with his fiery breath.

These infamous spirits dwelt in grassy mounds, called "forts," which were the entrances to underground palaces full of treasure, where there was always music and dancing. These treasure-houses were open only on November Eve when the throngs of spirits, fairies, and goblins trooped out for revels about the country. The old Druid idea of obsession, the besieging of a person by an evil spirit, was practised by them at that time.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Carolyn Emerick is a regular author with *Celtic Guide*, and also serves as Facebook, Pinterest, and Amazon print coordinator in a volunteer capacity.**

Carolyn Emerick writes about history, myth and folklore



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# Henceforth Tales

by Cass and Deborah Wright  
Bellows Falls, VT, USA

## Robertson

Late Autumn in the lowlands of Scotland was a time focused in the minds of most workaday people with the year's final harvest; it was a time of frantic activity, centered on gleaning the remaining root vegetables from all the farmers' and crofters' fields, turnips being arguably of the greatest importance, with potatoes and onions close behind. Also of serious concern was carting the remaining bushels of oats, barley, corn, and wheat to the mills for grinding, before they ran to rot. Butchering became a great priority as well - deciding which steers, wethers, and barrow hogs were large enough for slaughter, to see one's larder through the winter, yet were not of value enough to fatten for the grass markets in spring . . . and then of course, the orchards! All apples not already sold or consumed must be pressed into cider, creating another critical enterprise of the season.

But in the back of the country-folks' minds, as they hurried about their labors, was another expectation of the season, namely that of becoming the victims of brigandry, that skulking science of preying upon the average citizenry by disenfranchised men, usually lurking hungrily in the forests and hills and mountain passes between all those towns and villages and wee hamlets. Sometimes these brigands were common bandits, sometimes gallowglasses in between better contracts, or fugitives of petty crime, or disgraced warriors, discharged from military service elsewhere. Often in the role of commanding these brigands, one could find men of

noble birth and title, men who were heartily unwilling to wait upon the whims of clergy, royal courts, or the favor of clan chiefs, even elder siblings in order to grasp what it was they lusted for. On such matters, the great, ferocious clan of the Robertsons, often under the name of the "Donnachai," could certainly hold forth with fiery chapter and verse!

The chiefs of the Robertson name appear to be descended from Duncan, eldest son of Malcolm III, the Great Canmore of the 11th century. The name Robertson was derived from the head of the Clan in the days of the Bruce, who, having had signal services rewarded by that king with a grant of lands on the upper waters of the Garry, adopted the king's cognomen as the surname for his line. Patrick de Atholia, eldest son of the second marriage of Duncan de Atholia, one of the early clan chieftains, inherited from his father the lands of Lude, in 1358, although with the passage of years, virtually all of the district of Athol would come to be possessed, in one manner or another, by the ruthless chiefs of the House of Murray.



*Robertson Tartan and Shield*

Stepping back to the middle 1300s, though, we find Duncan with two sons, Donald and Alexander; the latter, known by the name of Rua, or Red, from the color of his hair, acquired the estate of Stranloch, for which he had a charter from James II in 1451, and was ancestor of the Robertsons of Straloch. Rua left an only son, John, who adopted the old family soubriquet, and called himself Reid (probably hoping to be recognized as that family's leader).

In 1392, a couple of years after King Robert III ascended the throne of Scotland, these "Sons of Robert" played savage roles in one of the fierce episodes so characteristic of that wild time. The savage Earl of Buchan, known as the Wolf of Badenoch, a son of Robert II, enraged by the Bishop of Moray, made a ferocious descent upon those lands, plundering the cathedral of Elgin, and putting both church and

town ruthlessly to torch. Soon after, the Wolf's example was followed by one of his natural sons, Duncan Stewart, who gathered a great force from the wild "men o' the mountains" near Atholl and Badenoch, armed only with their traditional swords and targes, and bursting through those steep mountain passes onto the plains of Forfar, proceeded to commit every sort of pillage, crime and atrocity.

Sir Walter Ogilvy, Sheriff of Angus, along with Sir Patrick Gray, and Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk, mustered the forces of the district, and rode at their head to stop the raiders. They attacked the outlaws at Gasklune, but were repelled and overwhelmed with their barbaric ferocity, the mounted knights in their ringmail armor dropping like stooks of corn in a spate.

The Ogilvy brothers, along with Cairncross, Forfar, Guthrie, and sixty men at arms, were all



*The area of Atholl and Badenoch*

slain, despite their righteous gusto, while Gray and Lindsay were so grievously wounded they barely survived. The fierceness of the Robertsons and the other Highland mountaineers on that occasion was shown by Lindsay having impaled one of them with his spear, pinning him to earth, only to witness the skewered man writhe back up along the spear, swing his claymore, and cut Lindsay through the stirrup and steel boot to the leg bone, before sliding back down to die.

The next event where the Clan played a bold part was, oddly enough, on the side of law and order. James I had been murdered in the Blackfriars Monastery at Perth in 1437, and the murderers, with their leader, Sir Robert Graham, had escaped into the wilds of the lands of Mar. The Earl of Atholl took part in the conspiracy, and in that he was a neighbor of the Robertsons, tried to lure them into joining him in that treason. The chief, Robert Reoch, not only chose instead to remain staunchly loyal to the Crown, but joined John Gorm Stewart in capturing the assassins, which they accomplished through dogged pursuit and determination.

Deciding the capture alone was not triumph enough, Robertson, in a brilliant stroke of bravado and self-aggrandizement, secured a sheriff's rick and personally drove Graham through the breadth of the city of Edinburgh, an entertainment finding great acclaim, with the public crowding the streets, turning out to view the disgraced knight on display, standing in the cart with his right hand nailed to a post. Delivered thus to the governor of Edinburgh Castle, Graham stood trial at a court of prosecution before the King's Justiciar. Few were surprised by the execution that took place shortly thereafter.

For this service, the Chief received from the new regents for little James II (yet king in name only), an addition to his family arms, greatly raising the Clan's image . . . *Henceforth*, proclaiming to one and all that the Crown of

Scotland was decreed to appear forevermore on the crest of the Children of Duncan. Many believe that it was from this Robert Reoch - known widely as Robert the Swarthy, and sometimes called Robert Duncanson - that later chiefs and clansmen officially took the name of Robertson, rather than in deference to any of the Old Kings, bringing to record the first preference among the clan to step away from their elder designation of Donnachai.

Robert the Swarthy did not stay lawful for long though; after the Atholl affair, he joined a trio of rapacious nobles, Douglas, Crawford of Lindsay, and Hamilton, who took advantage of the minority of the infant James II to satisfy their lawless desires by staging vicious raids.

The renegades struck hardest the holdings of the Bishop Kennedy of St. Andrews, who joined the Chancellor Crichton in an effort to halt their predations. Forthwith, the Black Douglas Earl, and the Crawford Earl of Lindsay, along with many allies, descended on Kennedy's lands in Fife and Angus, earnestly laying them to waste with great industry.

The Bishop retaliated to this perfidy by formally excommunicating the marauding nobles, placing all of their confederates, including Robert Reoch, beyond the pale eternally of any Christian redemption and afterlife.

As sobering a prospect as that doubtless seemed to many of the Clan, it served to slow down the aspirations and machinations of the Donnachai leaders not one whit.

During the Scottish civil wars, Donald Robertson, known as Caird Beag, "the Little Tinker," son of the 10th Chief, brought the Clan out for the Royalists under the Marquis of Montrose, and fought with distinguished valor at the Battle of Inverlochy, personally slaying no less than nineteen of the Campbell clansmen, although he is perhaps best remembered for the following anecdote:

When the main conflict was over, Donald built a fire along with some of his battlefield comrades, and began cooking a meal in an iron pot. Montrose himself, happening to pass by, took note of their activity, and asked to borrow the pot. Donald, however, firmly refused, saying aloud that he had right well enough earned the food that he was cooking, and that he deserved to enjoy it at his leisure. The Marquis, it is said, smiled at this, replying pleasantly: "I wish that more little tinkers had served His Majesty today as well as you have done, my storied Caird Beag."

Montrose was also ably aided by another Robertson, that being Alexander of Lude, who came to great prominence fighting for the cause of Charles I at the triumphant Battle of Tippermuir; though the infamous "Protestant Hammer," Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell could never quite catchup to that doughty warrior, he did retaliate against him by burning his beloved estates at Lude down to smoking ruin.

Sadly, that century ended worse yet for the Clan; another Alexander (nicknamed "the Poet"), the current chief when James VII met his crashing defeat in 1690, would pay for his fealty to the Jacobite cause with a hurried exile to the French high courts, and the grim message that all of his family estates, even the Great Hall at Struan, had been seized in forfeiture by the House of Orange. Putting the best face on this harrowing set of misfortunes as he could, Alexander Robertson requested a commission of rank from his host, the King of France, and thereby commanded a wing of the French army for a short period of time, until word arrived that amnesty had been granted him by Queen Anne herself, and that a return to Scotland would be deemed lawful.

Return he did, and was grateful to resume his duties as clan chief. But his gratitude did not extend to the monarch who had granted him amnesty, whom he still saw as no legitimate

ruler of Scotland, and come the Uprising of 1715, Alexander rallied his kinsmen, and brought them out once again for the lost prince then known as the Old Pretender. Captivity, and resultant escapes followed sad defeats, and soon the Poet Chief, not so young a man anymore, found himself again a fugitive-guest of his friends at the royal courts in Paris. Another general amnesty returned him to his beloved homeland, and still did the cause of the Stuarts burn so bright in Alexander's breast, that he hastened to the side of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Glenfinnan in '45. Gently, the Young Pretender cited Alexander Robertson's "advanced age", and retired him from service in affectionate honor. Still childless, this ever-inspiring chief died in 1749.

The Drumachaine line then provided the Robertson / Donnachai chiefs from that point forward, and descend thereby even until this very day, and even now they will point out to you that the ornate crown on their crest has always referenced the monarchs of Scotland, never England nor France, and that their cherished war cry, "Fierce When Roused" is as relevant today, as it was in ages past.

And I would recommend that we all take their word for it, lest the shades of those fierce, fallen warriors rise up howling from their graves to convince us that it is indeed so!

This material is just a sampling of one of the 60 Clan names and legends appearing in the Spring 2014 upcoming book; -

## *Henceforth Tales*

by Cass and Deborah Wright

Follow future issues of Celtic Guide for further information about 2014 publication. . . . and thank you for joining us at the hearth ! - DW

# So, what's next?

Well, there you have it, our ever-popular Halloween issue, and a jam-packed issue it is.

For November, our theme will be "Celebration." This will cover celebrations of many types that are currently being held, or were held in past mythology or history as a regular part of Celtic tradition. This can include annual Celtic Festivals, Highland Games and traditional celebrations, famous birthdays . . . you name it, and our authors probably will!

For December, we will have another free-for-all, where authors can provide their gifts of prose, poetry, photography and paintings for our readers' pleasure. The theme? "Our Gift."

We are going to hold off announcing the January 2015 theme for a wee bit. With the new year it will be time to reassess our path forward. So far we seem to have made some good decisions in that regard with many wonderful people volunteering their creative efforts to make the *Celtic Guide* the success it is.

A few may wonder why we continue this all-volunteer effort and the answer is simple – we love Celtic culture and want to do all we can to remember it, to promote it, to honor it and to continue it. And, as we've said before, we realize the word Celtic embraces other races, too, but in general we look for stories which involve the Six Celtic Nations, along with other hotbeds of Celtic-ness in places like Europe, the Southern Hemisphere and North America. We are so proud to recite the countries who have been represented in our publication. This month we added Romania to the list, which also includes the U.S., Canada, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, Portugal, Germany, Poland, New Zealand and Australia. Pretty impressive for a startup. Soon we will enter our fourth year and, as we always say . . . stay tuned!



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