

The First Fox To Come To Dursey Island

Long ago when I was young my grandad brought us all around the fire and started telling stories about fairies and ghosts, and he always told us about the first fox that came to Dursey.

When he was a young lad, one evening he was returning from the fair. While boarding the boat, a man noticed a fox lying on the rocks which he thought was dead. He threw him into the boat as his skin and tongue would be useful.

In olden times they used the fur for collars on coats and they dried the tongue and it was used to remove thorns or fish-bones from hands and feet.

On landing on Dursey, the men were getting out of the boat, when up jumped the fox and ran out of the boat and escaped. He travelled the island killing the fowl. The men often tried to trap him, but he was too clever. He had his den on a cliff and when the dogs chased him, he went over the edge and swung off a briar and the dogs followed him, but they got killed at the bottom of the cliff.

After several attempts to catch him, without success, one man got an idea; they would cut the briar and just leave it hanging. So that night they got the dogs and chased him. He ran to the edge of the cliff and caught the briar and off he went down to the bottom and was killed on the rocks below. That was the end of the fox in Dursey.

A couple of years ago, another fox arrived in Dursey Island. They have tried to get rid of him by several means, but he is still too cute for them. They had best look out for a briar hanging over a cliff. By the way, this is a true story.

Told by: Denis Healy and son Donal Healy

Written by: Elaine Healy, Finana, Castletownbere, Co. Cork

Peadarín O'Shea and the Fairies

Peadarín O'Shea was a small little man who lived in Killaugh village between the years of 1800 and 1900. He lived with his brother and sister and her husband.

He was widely known throughout the Beara peninsula for being in regular contact with the spirits of the other world between sunset and sunrise.

He told the locals himself that he had numerously travelled around the district at night time with the fairies but of course he was invisible at those particular times to the human population.

One dark cloudy night when every living soul was in by their glowing firesides, Muirisín's grandfather, Old Tade, who was a pension aged man at this stage, was roaming his lands in Sleibhín-Killaugh when he was put astray by the fairies.

He couldn't find his way home as much as he tried.



The Stolen Child - Bob Finn, Cahermore, Allibies



The Rib of Hair - Marie Murphy



Droichead-na-nGadaí - Claire Nidecker, Eyeries

big wave broke and drowned him.

Later that day his body was washed ashore. Local people hauled his body up the cliff. Everybody in the parish was sad when they heard the news. His remains were brought to the local Church by horse and cart. His wife and eight children walked after the cart crying. He was buried in Allihies cemetery.

Told by Conn the Post

Written by Neil O'Sullivan, Cluin, Allihies

The Rib of Hair

In Knockroe, over 100 years ago, there was supposed to be an evil spirit in the form of a woman. For a number of years she cast spells on people. If anyone came near the mountain where she lived between midnight and five in the morning she would kill them.

She was drowned off a cliff in Gour called Poilín. Before she was drowned she asked the men who were going to drown her to let one rib of her hair above the sea. They refused because they said that she could sink all the ships that came her way if there was a part of her above the sea.

Told by: Tess Kelly

Written by: Marie Murphy

Droichead-na-nGadaí

A very long time ago, there was a monastery in Coulagh.

One cold wet winter's night a monk was returning to the monastery after a hard day's work on the monks' farm. Complaining and feeling miserable, he entered the monastery, soaked to the skin. He was soon quietened by the head monk when he was told he should thank God for the bad weather as well as the fine. As a penance for complaining he was ordered to stand waist deep in the river under the bridge and to take a staff in his hand. He was told, if the staff had bloomed by morning, God had forgiven him.

During the night he heard a rustling noise. Soon he saw a thief stealing cattle from a neighbouring farm. When the thief saw him he asked why he was standing in the stream. After the monk had told his story the thief said, "If that is what you get for complaining, God only knows what I'll get". Immediately he grabbed a staff and waded into the river.

In the morning, one staff had bloomed, but it was the thief's. The bridge has been called Droichead-na-nGadaí, the Thief's Bridge, ever since.

Told by: Mary Harrington

Written by Orlagh Harrington

Storms and Reic

I live near the sea in Allihies. In winter we get big storms in from the Atlantic. The fishermen haul up their boats in winter from the storms. My father is a fisherman and I worry when he is out fishing, for fear a storm would blow up.

Weeds are washed up in big storms. The farmers draw home the sea-weed, and spread it on the land as fertiliser. In storms drift-wood (reic) is washed ashore. Reic is timber, pieces of fishing nets, ropes, and fishing buoys.

Looking for reic is dangerous in stormy weather. Many men have been drowned. My great grandfather was drowned taking reic in February 1917. Three men were blown up when they tried to open a mine which was washed ashore in 1921. In big storms fish were washed ashore. They were collected, salted and eaten by local people. There is a saying, "After the storm comes the calm".

After Reic

My grandfather was a fearsome man for taking reic. He was washed away by a big wave. He lived in Coom, and he used to watch the sea day and night for reic.

One morning there was a lot of timber being washed ashore, in a place called Cuas-na-Staighre. There was a big storm blowing. He climbed down the hundred foot cliff, to take some of the timber. A



Reic - Neil O'Sullivan



Storytelling - Caroline Murphy, Counlough, Cabermore, Allihies

in. Then the dead man was buried. His wife would then take his clothes out of the house, call to her husband's spirit and then she would take them with her to church for three Sundays".

The children were really interested in what they had heard, so they asked their grandfather to tell them a story every week. In this way they heard about the traditions in Beara long ago.

Siuna Bartels
Eyeries

The Gallaun

Once upon a time there were two standing stones in a field in Bere Island. Everyone thought they belonged to the fairies. A man who was building a house wanted a stone for a lintel, so he got one of the stones from the field. Everybody told him that he was crazy and that the Little People would be after him and make his life a misery.

That evening he left his work and the stone was still in place. Next morning he returned to his house and to his amazement the stone was gone and nothing was disturbed around where it had been. Later on he was walking home and as he passed the field where he got the stone from, he noticed that the stones were back in place. Nobody ever went near them again and to this day they are standing there still. That townland is called "Ré na Gallaun".

Told by Mrs. Ann Power to Ursula Power

The Mysterious Cow

Long ago there lived, in a small stone cottage on a hill, a family of fourteen children. A family of this size was quite usual at the time of this story, and the majority of them were eking out a living on a miserable, unfertile patch of land. Diseases such as typhoid, cholera, dyphteria and measles were common among the people of this time.

It was during a cold wet November of one year that measles struck the Sheehan household. First the twins, Michael and Séamus, then the three eldest, all went down together. As the days went by child after child went down with the measles until all fourteen children were ill. The mother and father were beside themselves with worry. They could not afford the luxury of a doctor and any other cure they had tried wasn't working. Also the one cow they had was dry at this time and the family had no milk to give to the children.

One morning as the father went out to work in his field he noticed that instead of one there were now two cows in the byre. On entering the byre he saw that this strange cow's udders were so full she was dripping milk onto the stone floor. Without stopping to think for a moment he grabbed a tin that was by the door and proceeded to fill it. When the can was full he went to the house to give it to his wife. He told the wife of the strange cow and she claimed it was from "the little people".

The mysterious cow stayed at the farm for a week and during this week whenever milk was needed by the family the father only had to go to the cow and fill the can from the never-empty udder.

Written by Mary Louise Murphy (14)
Ard-na-Greine, Castletownbere.

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Grandfather Tells a Story

One cold evening an old man sat by the fire telling his grandchildren a story.

"Do you know Mrs Crowley down the road?" he began. "When her husband died two blackguards decided to play a trick on her. The night after the funeral the two blackguards hid in the bushes waiting for the woman to come out. After a long while she came out with her husband's clothes. 'Come collect your clothes Paddy', she called. 'I am coming, I am coming, Peggie', the two mocked. Poor Peggie dropped the bundle of clothes and ran into the house. The two lads went home and boasted about their good joke".

The children were puzzled about the story their grandfather had told. "But why did she go out with her husband's clothes?", they asked. Grandfather then realized he had never told them anything about the traditions surrounding death and funerals in the olden days.

"I will tell you a bit more about the old days", he said. "Just after some-one had died their family and friends would come to the wake in the house. At the wake you could see people dancing, singing, smoking clay pipes and the older people telling stories, in general having good crack. The wake would last one night at least. On the last night the neighbours would stay over ready for the funeral the next morning. They would put the coffin on two chairs outside the house for a few minutes. Then the horse and cart would come to take it to the graveyard. If the dead person was a married man his wife would sit on the coffin to keep the spirits

The Beara Book of Wonders

An Allihies Folklore Group Publication

Introduction

Every civilisation has its rituals and beliefs, its miracles and wonders, but not every country is as fortunate as our own in having such a rich oral folklore tradition.

In previous Allihies Folklore Group publications, much of the information used was gleaned from scholarly sources and library archives; we also drew heavily on the wealth of knowledge made available by local people, but it was decided that for this project, it would be timely to see how much of our folklore tradition is still known to the children of Beara.

The results are heartening: The Beara Book of Wonders is proof positive that not just the art of storytelling is flourishing in Beara - so too is the visual interpretation of these stories. For this we can be thankful to the adults and teachers who continue to pass on folklore to the children, and to the children themselves who continue to take an active interest in the subject.

Editing and layout:

Deirdre McCartin, Mary F. Murphy, Marc O'Sullivan

Cover photograph: Karl Grimes

Published by the Allihies Folklore Group, 1991

The Allihies Folklore Group

The Allihies Folklore Group Co-operative are proud to have launched this unique book of children's folklore on the occasion of President Mary Robinson's visit to Allihies on December 9th, 1991. Mrs. Robinson made the first visit of any President of Ireland to the Beara peninsula to open our permanent workplace in an old stone building on the strand at Ballydonovan.

The Beara Book of Wonders contains 21 folktales, mainly collected and recorded by the children of Beara.

The Allihies Folklore Group is a voluntary employment creation in a coastal area of great natural beauty. For over a century, Beara has been a place of great beauty and some of the youth who are represented in the book have remained in their homeland.

AD K. K. K. K. K.

Boats at openish Pier, for Deirdre.

IR 0000515

The Beara Book of Wonders

A collection of 21 stories,
with 7 colour illustrations,
by the children of Beara.

THE AUGUST 1991 ISSUE
THE IRISH YOUTH FOUNDATION
FOR THEIR MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COST OF THE PUBLICATION

THE ALLIHIES FOLKLORE GROUP
ALLIHIES, BEARA, WEST COAST
THE 01973 3411

An Allihies Folklore Group Publication

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Press Gangs

Towards the closing years of the eighteenth century press-ganging was a common occurrence. This is the story of one lucky escape.

It was a fine summer's morning when five men set out from Castletownbere to fish in Bantry Bay, behind Bere Island. They dropped their lines, and waited for a bite from cod or haddock, which were in abundance at that time.

It was not unusual to see schooners passing the bay, so they took no notice of the large ship which slowed down after rounding the Mizen. It stopped about a mile out from them and two boats, with six sailors in each, were lowered over the side.

Silently, stealthily, and swiftly, the boats came nearer and nearer. Tade O'Sullivan, the oldest member of the crew that was fishing, looked up and noticed the two boats, which were approaching at high speed. There was no time to haul in the anchor so he cut his rope and ordered his men to row back into Berehaven Harbour as fast as possible.

The crew were puzzled, but obeyed immediately. Tade explained that the sailors were coming to capture them, and force them aboard the man-of-war, where they would have to work as sailors. They might never see their homes and families again.

The note of urgency in his voice made the crew row faster, and within minutes they had reached Ardnakinna Point on the west side of Bere Island, where the lighthouse now stands. Tade, being an experienced fisherman, knew the coast well, and ordered the men to make a sharp right turn into "Pluais Fé Thalamh", which they did (Pluais Fé Thalamh is a cave which opens up at the back to form a wide steep passage).

A last glance backwards told Tade that the sailors were not far behind, but they could not see where the fishermen were hidden. The boats were inside the harbour in a matter of seconds. The Bearamen rounded a rock, which jutted out. They hid and waited, with bated breath, to see if they would be caught.

After what seemed like an eternity, the two British boats arrived into Berehaven Harbour, and much to the relief of the fishermen, went straight past the cave entrance. They did not dare come out of hiding, until they were sure the British boats were gone.

Sometime later, they emerged from the cave, and got home safely. All five men, fortunately, lived to tell the tale of their harrowing experience.

Told by Mr. Michael O'Sullivan Greene
to Connie Murphy
Written by Mary Louise Murphy (14)
Ard-na-Greine, East End, Castletownbere.

Peter said goodbye and thanked the Ráib for his hospitality, but on his way home he came upon the murderer's sheep and decided to have his revenge on the Ráib. So he rounded up six or seven sheep and headed for home with them, not knowing that the Ráib was following him.

The two of them continued on over the hills, as far as Filane, where the Ráib was just about to kill the unfortunate slater when the road came into view. Peter fled across the road, leaving the Ráib too terrified to cross for fear of being caught and convicted of murder.

Peter left the sheep in the care of the British soldiers, who were at that time stationed at the golf links, until he was sure the Ráib was gone out of the area. Peter then took the sheep back to his farm in Derrymihan.

Niall Dunne (12)
Rodeen, Castletownbere

The Devil at Dunboy

It was a cold and misty night at Dunboy woods. The wind was blowing through the trees. A stranger was walking through the woods. He had nowhere to go. He was just about to settle down for the night under a big old oak tree when he spotted a light through the branches. He got up and began to walk towards it. He discovered it was the light from a big house called Puxley's Mansion.

Told by Denis O'Shea to Patricia Harrington

Inside, Puxley himself was playing cards with some of his friends when a knock came on the door. One of the maids answered it and found it was the stranger. He asked for the master of the house.

When Puxley came out to see who was there, the stranger asked for a bed for the night. Puxley said yes and he also invited the stranger to join in the game of cards. They were playing away when one of the stranger's cards fell to the floor. It happened to be the five of hearts.

A maid bent down to pick it up. She glanced at the stranger's legs and saw that he had hooves instead of feet. She knew at once he was the devil. Her face turned white, as if she had seen a ghost. She asked if she could go home, and Mr. Puxley said, "Yes, but don't forget, eight o'clock in the morning".

About ten minutes later, the maid left the mansion. The stranger said, "I need some fresh air". So the stranger left and ran after the maid. He caught up with her and stabbed her, and then he disappeared.

The next morning, the maid was found dead on the pathway. After her funeral, nobody went near the mansion at night again.

Brian Harrington (11)
East End, Castletownbere
and
Pat Carleton (11)
Stella Maris, North Road, Castletownbere

He took her into his boat and brought her home. If he had not she would have drowned him.

When he got home he did not tell her anything about the hair. She stayed with him to find out where the hair was. It turned out that she was a great cook and a good housekeeper. Even though she was ugly Seamusín was very happy.

A few years went by and she still could not find the hair, though she did everything in her power to find it. One night Seamusín went out fishing again. While he was out in the boat it got very dark. He heard a singing and music going on. He knew it was the fairies. They gave him a drink. In order to get away from them he drank it quickly. Then he tried to get away.

It was in the morning when he got home. He was so tired he threw himself into the bed and fell asleep. The hag saw him coming in the door. He was sound asleep and the hag lay down beside him. The man started to talk in his sleep. She asked him, "What did you do with my lovely hair?" He thought about the beautiful girl that was in the tramel. He then told her where the hair was. She found the hair and put it on herself. She lay down on the bed beside him again.

When Seamusín woke out of his deep sleep, there was the beautiful girl that he had seen in his tramel - lying beside him. He got up to make sure it was her, but where her legs should have been there was a big fish's tail.

Told by Denis O'Shea to Patricia Harrington

The Slater and the Ráib

There is a story told of how, during the last century, a local man by the name of Peter Harrington, a slater by trade, escaped from the clutches of the Ráib - a well-known murderer.

One day when Peter was bringing his cow to Kenmare market via the hills, a thick fog came down as he approached Lauragh. Seeing a house nearby he decided to seek shelter for the night from the occupants.

As soon as the door was opened, Peter realised his mistake - there before him stood the Ráib! He was invited in to stay the night. Harrington lay down but did not go to sleep, as he was suspicious of what the Ráib might do to him.

During the night his suspicion was justified as he heard footsteps creeping towards the fire. Peter opened one eye slowly to see the Ráib heating a poker until it glowed red. The Ráib walked over to Peter and held the red-hot poker to his face. He remained motionless until he heard the Ráib moving away.

While still recovering from the shock, Peter heard the cow outside give out an awful bawl - the Ráib had killed the unfortunate animal.

In the morning the two of them pretended that nothing had happened during the night. The Ráib said that the cow had run away during the night, although Peter knew what had really happened.

in everything he said. This shows that Peadarín must have been in the fairy crowd.

* Sleibhín mentioned in the previous extract was everknown to be a natural habitat for the spirits of the other side.

Written by Carmel Ann Harrington
Killaugh West, Allihies, Beara, Co. Cork

Ros Caha

Once upon a time, there lived a poor small family, down by the sea, in the townland of Droumlave.

Once, during the famine, a travelling woman came to this house begging for food. The woman of the house gave her the last grains of wheat she had, even though she wanted the wheat herself to plant.

When her husband returned home that evening he was very annoyed with what she has done. He said in an angry voice, "We will starve to death". To which the woman said, "We will sow the chaff".

After a lot of persuasion he agreed to do as she asked. They ploughed up a field down by the sea, and as fine a field of wheat as ever was seen grew from the chaff. Since then that field or point has been known as Ros Caha, which means the "point of the chaff".

Written by Kieran O'Sullivan
Inchintaglin, Adrigole.

Bád Sidhe

A story my grandad often told me was about the Bád Sidhe, the fairy boat. He always started with:

There was a sheet of mist hovering over the surface of the water. It was not very thick because a person could easily see from the Bull Rock to Dursey Head, which was a fair distance away.

It was on that night that two boats were returning from fishing near the Bull Rock. On returning the two boats parted, one going the south side and the other one going the north side. The north side was by far the shortest, and it was sure that the boat which went that way would get to the Quay first.

So the boats parted at Dursey Head and sailed their own ways. After some time one of the boats realised that they were being followed by what they thought was the other boat. Now they were about the same distance from the Quay, so a race immediately began. For a long time the boats were far apart and the other boat could not be seen.

But! When the south side boat came to the finish and were about to haul up their boat, which would take a good while, they noticed that the other boat was already hauled up dry on the land. All the people were lead to believe that the boat they had raced against was indeed the Bád Sidhe.

Told by: Donal Healy and his father, Denis Healy
Written by Elaine Healy
Finaha, Castletownbere, Co. Cork

The Story of Patrick O'Sullivan

There was once a cruel man named Patrick O'Sullivan. He was married with one daughter. The daughter's name was Ann, but everyone else had to call her Miss Ann. Patrick O'Sullivan collected the rent around Milcove and Filane for Lord Bantry. At that time the children of the families used to go from tree to tree gathering the eggs from the birds' nests.

One day when the children were out picking eggs, Miss Ann was walking through the little wood. A boy named Tade Shearig dropped an egg on Miss Ann's head. She ran away home crying and when she got home, she washed her hair and told her father the story.

Next day Patrick went to the boy's house and he told them that if their son Tade didn't leave by the following day they would all have to leave. So that night the boy took a little food and left his home and went to Cork city.

Twenty years passed and the boy never came back. By this time Patrick O'Sullivan was dead and buried in Bere Island. One calm night, in the middle of summer, there were a few men out fishing between Furious Pier and Bere Island.

The quiet was broken by a man calling the fishermen. They rowed back to Furious Pier. The man asked would they bring him over to Bere Island. So they rowed over to the Island with the stranger. There he said, "You go back fishing, and when I want you to pick me up I'll give a whistle".

The men went back to their work and after a few minutes they heard singing and dancing. Then they heard a whistle. They rowed back to Bere Island and picked up the stranger. They asked him what had happened and he said, "My name is Tade Shearig and I danced on the grave of Patrick O'Sullivan who made me leave my home twenty years ago. Now I have got my own back on him".

John Paul Sheehan (11)

Filane Middle, Castletownbere, Co. Cork

Calling the Dead

This is a tradition that happened in my great-grandfather's time, when everyone was afraid of the dead.

In those days everyone believed that after midnight all the dead would leave their graves, and come back to see how everything was going. If there was a death in the house, everyone would be very lonely. No-one would leave the house after dark, in case they might see the dead coming home. Traditionally, when a person died all her or his clothes would be given away and worn in respect of the dead person (in those days they were glad to get them, because they had so little themselves).

So on the first Saturday night, after the funeral, at 12 o'clock midnight, all the clothes of the dead person would be taken outside, and put across a ditch. The name of the dead person would then be

called out loud three times "Do you want these back?" When no answer came back after the third call the clothes could then be given away. But it was told that on one occasion, after a funeral, it happened that after the first call, back came the answer "I DO!"

Written by Louise Harrington (13)
Ballydonegan, Allihies

—The Mysterious Holy Water Font—

Cahermore Church was the first church to be built in this parish. The local priest wanted to save as much expense as possible and so instead of buying a new holy water font, he decided to take the old holy water font from the ruins of the monastery in Allihies.

The font was removed to Cahermore. The day after it had been brought over somebody discovered that it was missing and a search revealed that it was back in Allihies, in the exact spot in which it had been before.

It was removed again to Cahermore but the same mysterious thing happened. The very next day the font was found back in Allihies and this time there was a small hole in the base of it. The font was therefore useless and could not be moved again. It can be seen to this day in Allihies graveyard with a hole in the bottom of it.

Told by Mary Kelly to Marie Murphy

—Cuas na Seisrighe—

Approximately two hundred years ago a very sad and strange event occurred. A man who was ploughing his field had an accident.

The man got up early one morning and began to plough his field. His neighbour arose to find him working. He approached him and said, "Do you know what day it is?". The man replied, "All I know is that I have a field to plough". His neighbour then said, "Don't you know it is St. Gobnait's Day?". The man ignored him and carried on with his work.

His neighbour did the same and went on his way to Mass, cursing the old fool. About ten minutes after the man's neighbour had left him the accident occurred. The field had no fence or wire bordering it from the jagged cliff below. When the farmer came to the edge of the cliff the two horses kept on going. The farmer, the two horses and the plough dashed off the cliff. It is thought that the reason for this strange happening is that the farmer had been cursed for not going to Mass by St. Gobnait.

Nowadays no man works on a holy day, maybe because of this strange event. The land on which this accident occurred is now owned by Mr. Denis Harrington. That place is called "Cuas Na Seisrighe", which means the cave of the pair of ploughing horses.

Told to Louise Harrington, Droum North, C.T.B., by her parents Pauline and Jerry Harrington.

The Boaster

A long time ago, in the village of Allihies, an unusual thing occurred, and this is what happened.

One day, a stranger walked into the village of Allihies. This was unusual enough because at that time there weren't many strangers that came because of lack of transport. He got accommodation and soon enough settled in, and got to know the people. But as people soon found out, he was a boaster.

Now, a lot of ghost stories were being told in the village, and almost every night a crowd of men gathered around a fire, in a house on the outskirts of the village, telling stories.

One night, as usual, the men gathered around. The boaster boasted about how brave he was. The other men decided to test his bravery. One man spoke about a coffin exposed in the local graveyard. The boaster was asked if he would go and drive a nail on the top of the coffin. He agreed and got a hammer and nails.

It was very dark when he got to the graveyard, and he couldn't see very well. By accident he nailed the tail of his coat to the coffin. When he tried to move away, he couldn't. He collapsed in fright, and was found there dead the next morning.

Written by Aoife O'Sullivan,
Lehanmore, Allihies, Beara

The Woman from the Sea

There was an old man living in a house near the sea called Seamusín. He was a fisherman. He used to be out very early in the morning and very late at night.

One morning he was out early hauling a tramel. As he was hauling it into the boat, he was looking down at the net. Up from the deep Seamusín saw this beautiful face coming towards him. He stopped hauling the tramel. She was still there looking up at him, smiling. He started hauling the tramel again quickly. As she was coming closer to the top of the water she was getting more beautiful. When he looked at her he said to himself, "Now I have the most beautiful woman in Beara. Nobody will know where she came from"

He hauled the net in a bit further. As soon as he saw her head coming close, he reached down under the water to bring her into the boat. The first thing he grabbed was her lovely long hair. He got a good hold to it and said, "I'll save you now, my beautiful girl". He gave a big heave and after his effort, he pulled this thing into the boat which turned out to be a lovely head of hair and nothing else. He did not know what to do. He decided to bring the hair home. He put it under the bed and did not tell anybody.

Another evening he was out fishing and a woman came up to the boat swimming. She had no hair. When he saw her she looked like an old hag. "You have something belonging to me", she said. "Until you give it to me, I will stay with you".

He took her into his boat and bought her home. If he had not she would have drowned him.

When he got home he did not tell her anything about the hair. She stayed with him to find out where the hair was. It turned out that she was a great cook and a good housekeeper. Even though she was ugly Seamusín was very happy.

A few years went by and she still could not find the hair, though she did everything in her power to find it. One night Seamusín went out fishing again. While he was out in the boat it got very dark. He heard a singing and music going on. He knew it was the fairies. They gave him a drink. In order to get away from them he drank it quickly. Then he tried to get away.

It was in the morning when he got home. He was so tired he threw himself into the bed and fell asleep. The hag saw him coming in the door. He was sound asleep and the hag lay down beside him. The man started to talk in his sleep. She asked him, "What did you do with my lovely hair?" He thought about the beautiful girl that was in the tramel. He then told her where the hair was. She found the hair and put it on herself. She lay down on the bed beside him again.

When Seamusín woke out of his deep sleep, there was the beautiful girl that he had seen in his tramel - lying beside him. He got up to make sure it was her, but where her legs should have been there was a big fish's tail.

Told by Denis O'Shea to Patricia Harrington

The Slater and the Ráib

There is a story told of how, during the last century, a local man by the name of Peter Harrington, a slater by trade, escaped from the clutches of the Ráib - a well-known murderer.

One day when Peter was bringing his cow to Kenmare market via the hills, a thick fog came down as he approached Lauragh. Seeing a house nearby he decided to seek shelter for the night from the occupants.

As soon as the door was opened, Peter realised his mistake - there before him stood the Ráib! He was invited in to stay the night. Harrington lay down but did not go to sleep, as he was suspicious of what the Ráib might do to him.

During the night his suspicion was justified as he heard footsteps creeping towards the fire. Peter opened one eye slowly to see the Ráib heating a poker until it glowed red. The Ráib walked over to Peter and held the red-hot poker to his face. He remained motionless until he heard the Ráib moving away.

While still recovering from the shock, Peter heard the cow outside give out an awful bawl - the Ráib had killed the unfortunate animal.

In the morning the two of them pretended that nothing had happened during the night. The Ráib said that the cow had run away during the night, although Peter knew what had really happened.

Peter said goodbye and thanked the Ráib for his hospitality, but on his way home he came upon the murderer's sheep and decided to have his revenge on the Ráib. So he rounded up six or seven sheep and headed for home with them, not knowing that the Ráib was following him.

The two of them continued on over the hills, as far as Filane, where the Ráib was just about to kill the unfortunate slater when the road came into view. Peter fled across the road, leaving the Ráib too terrified to cross for fear of being caught and convicted of murder.

Peter left the sheep in the care of the British soldiers, who were at that time stationed at the golf links, until he was sure the Ráib was gone out of the area. Peter then took the sheep back to his farm in Derrymihan.

Niall Dunne (12)
Rodeen, Castletownbere

The Devil at Dunboy

It was a cold and misty night at Dunboy woods. The wind was blowing through the trees. A stranger was walking through the woods. He had nowhere to go. He was just about to settle down for the night under a big old oak tree when he spotted a light through the branches. He got up and began to walk towards it. He discovered it was the light from a big house called Puxley's Mansion.

Told by Denis O'Shea to Patricia Harrington

Inside, Puxley himself was playing cards with some of his friends when a knock came on the door. One of the maids answered it and found it was the stranger. He asked for the master of the house.

When Puxley came out to see who was there, the stranger asked for a bed for the night. Puxley said yes and he also invited the stranger to join in the game of cards. They were playing away when one of the stranger's cards fell to the floor. It happened to be the five of hearts.

A maid bent down to pick it up. She glanced at the stranger's legs and saw that he had hooves instead of feet. She knew at once he was the devil. Her face turned white, as if she had seen a ghost. She asked if she could go home, and Mr. Puxley said, "Yes, but don't forget, eight o'clock in the morning".

About ten minutes later, the maid left the mansion. The stranger said, "I need some fresh air". So the stranger left and ran after the maid. He caught up with her and stabbed her, and then he disappeared.

The next morning, the maid was found dead on the pathway. After her funeral, nobody went near the mansion at night again.

Brian Harrington (11)
East End, Castletownbere
and
Pat Carleton (11)
Stella Maris, North Road, Castletownbere

Press Gangs

Towards the closing years of the eighteenth century press-ganging was a common occurrence. This is the story of one lucky escape.

It was a fine summer's morning when five men set out from Castletownbere to fish in Bantry Bay, behind Bere Island. They dropped their lines, and waited for a bite from cod or haddock, which were in abundance at that time.

It was not unusual to see schooners passing the bay, so they took no notice of the large ship which slowed down after rounding the Mizen. It stopped about a mile out from them and two boats, with six sailors in each, were lowered over the side.

Silently, stealthily, and swiftly, the boats came nearer and nearer. Tade O'Sullivan, the oldest member of the crew that was fishing, looked up and noticed the two boats, which were approaching at high speed. There was no time to haul in the anchor so he cut his rope and ordered his men to row back into Berehaven Harbour as fast as possible.

The crew were puzzled, but obeyed immediately. Tade explained that the sailors were coming to capture them, and force them aboard the man-of-war, where they would have to work as sailors. They might never see their homes and families again.

The note of urgency in his voice made the crew row faster, and within minutes they had reached Ardnakinna Point on the west side of Bere Island, where the lighthouse now stands. Tade, being an experienced fisherman, knew the coast well, and ordered the men to make a sharp right turn into "Pluais Fé Thalamh", which they did (Pluais Fé Thalamh is a cave which opens up at the back to form a wide steep passage).

A last glance backwards told Tade that the sailors were not far behind, but they could not see where the fishermen were hidden. The boats were inside the harbour in a matter of seconds. The Bearamen rounded a rock, which jutted out. They hid and waited, with bated breath, to see if they would be caught.

After what seemed like an eternity, the two British boats arrived into Berehaven Harbour, and much to the relief of the fishermen, went straight past the cave entrance. They did not dare come out of hiding, until they were sure the British boats were gone.

Sometime later, they emerged from the cave, and got home safely. All five men, fortunately, lived to tell the tale of their harrowing experience.

Told by Mr. Michael O'Sullivan Greene
to Connie Murphy
Written by Mary Louise Murphy (14)
Ard-na-Greine, East End, Castletownbere.

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