Fairy Investigation Society Newsletter 20, New Series, Jun 2024

The Fairy Investigation Society has members from many different walks of life with different views about fairies and fairy existence: what ties us together, in mutual respect, is an interest in fairy-lore and folklore.

And see ye not yon bonny road

That winds about the fernie brae?

That is the Road to fair Elfland,

Where thou and I this night maun gae.

Thomas Rhymer

Contents

Fairy News

Let's start with fairies in art. In the world of fashion, Irish designer Annie Leona has drawn inspiration from folklore for her new line. Leona, who has always believed in fairies, incorporates ethereal elements and whimsical designs reminiscent of fairy tales. Irish artist Bebhinn Eilish, meanwhile, explores mythology, mysticism, and misogyny through her works. Bebhinn is particularly interested in mythical female figures and her art was featured in Dublin's Better City gallery (15 Mar-15 May). Luxury brand Chopard has also been inspired by fairies for their latest jewellery collection. Items include such fairy favourites as 'fluttering beauties', 'mushroom magic' and whispering fairies. Fairies, in short, are everywhere.

Recent research has offered fresh perspectives on the mysterious 'fairy rings' observed in arid landscapes. Studies led by Professor Ehud Meron at Ben-Gurion University have applied advanced theories involving phenotypic plasticity and spatial patterning. This approach suggests that the fairy circles are crucial ecological responses to water stress, providing a scientific explanation that complements their folklore history. Looking at European fungi circle. Mycologist Maurizio Zotti from the University of

Naples Federico II writes about fungi rings in his paper 'One ring to rule them all'. These formations, Zotti argues, encourage biodiversity and help maintain balanced soil chemistry, playing a vital role in regulating biogeochemical cycles, decomposing organic matter, and restoring nutrients to the environment.

Then some fairy events. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, at the end of July and early August, will feature a play, *Sherlock Holmes and the Man Who Believed in Fairies* about Cottingley. This is by fairy author extraordinaire Fiona Maher. Fiona, who will have a very busy summer, runs the Faery Festival at Llangollen 10 and 11 August, now in its twelfth year. If you think a twelfth anniversary is remarkable The Annual Fairy and Human Relations Congress is in its twenty-fourth year. This meeting will take place 18 to 22 July 'near Salem, OR': guests will come together 'with our subtle allies to join forces, to learn how we can work together in healing and regenerating the Earth.'

As to fairy books Exeter University Press is bringing out its new series: Exeter New Approaches to Legend, Folklore and Popular Belief. This summer and autumn titles will include: *The Exeter Companion to Fairies, Nereids, Trolls and other Social Supernatural Beings* (including several FIS members as contributors); John Clark, *The Green Children of Woolpit*; and Jeremy Harte, *Fairy Encounters in*

Medieval England. An edited volume on changelings from Ireland to Iran is expected in 2025.

FIS membership now stands at about 730. We have also expanded our Facebook operations. As well as regular posts on the public page we have introduced a private page for FIS members: 'Secret Fairies'. If you are interested do please go to the page on Facebook; fill out the three simple questions; and you will be in. There are presently about 230 of us signed up. I (SRY) have very tentatively started a 'listserv' too. Anyone interested in joining should write to fairyinvestigationsociety@gmail.com with 'listserv' in the title: there is a cap at a hundred members.

Charles Altamont Doyle, Fairies and a Thistle

Fairy Sightings: Childhood Visions

The following childhood fairies are taken from the first entries in what will becomes *Fairy Census 3* (www.fairyist.com/survey).

US (New England). *Male; 1990s; 0-10; inside a private house; with one other person who did not share my experience; 3 AM-6 AM; less than a minute; no fairy mood reported; occasional supernatural experiences; you had just woken up or were*

just about to go to sleep; no special experience reported. 'I was spending the night at my grandparents' house with my mother in the guest room. I woke up in bed around dawn and rolled over to watch the sun rising out the window. I saw a small man, about eight to ten inches tall, dressed in old brown clothing with a brimmed hat, and he was transparent from the waist down. I remember he seemed to be made of what I can only describe as TV static or like a shimmering silhouette. He casually walked across the windowsill, not even acknowledging I was there, and jumped off the end into the shadows and disappeared. I was absolutely terrified and woke my mother up in hysterics. I know I wasn't dreaming or imagining it, as I can vividly still picture the experience in my mind. I brought it up to my mother as an adult, and she distinctly remembers the morning that happened and how scared I was.' Fairies are 'inhabitants of an unseen aspect of reality'.

US (Georgia). *Other; 1990s; 0-10; graveyard; on my own; 9 PM-12 AM; ten minutes to an hour; friendly, aloof, somber; occasional supernatural experiences; no special state reported; hair prickling or tingling before or during the experience, a sense that the experience was a display put on specially for you, unusually vivid memories of the experience, a sense that the experience marked a turning point in your life, a sudden warmth before the experience.* 'I was around six or seven years old, my family lived in a duplex right next to a graveyard that happened

to have a playground right next to it, along with paths to walk along between the headstones. I used to sneak out to go play on the swing set near it, when I should have been getting ready for bed. I remember that I never felt particularly afraid of the graveyard because there was a pair of ladies who were always by the graves that seemed to watch me. They were extremely pale with dark eyes and wild black hair decorated with ribbons; they wore matching white gowns that seemed to be almost translucent but what always struck me as odd were their legs. Their legs were long and covered in stripes like a Zebra while their feet seemed more like hooves or like they had shiny black shoes of some sort. They always seemed to be keeping an eye on me while they would reach into a good-sized burlap pouch and pull out long strips of meat that they would eat. I remember I could talk to them and they would sometimes tell me stories about the people buried there. I asked them what kind of meat they were eating and they would just smile before changing the subject. Before it would get too late they would both walk me to the edge of the graveyard and made sure I got home safely. This happened multiple times. I remember years later telling my mom about this and she told me she thought I was just talking about imaginary friends when I was a kid, she also said I was a very morbid child and that I would 'make up stories' about the people buried in the graveyard. We moved away eventually. The graveyard is

still there with a new plastic playground in place of the old metal one I used to play on. I remember looking up some of the names of the people buried and found the stories the zebra ladies were true. I've never seen the ladies again and I haven't heard of anyone else seeing them either. I always suspected they might not have been humans but I'm not sure if I saw fairies or very strange ghosts or maybe ghouls of some kind. Whatever they were I still have those memories after all this time.' 'The fairies looked like extremely pale women with dark almost black eyes. Their hair was also black and was decorated with silken ribbons. Their mouths were usually smiling or chewing and their nails looked very sharp. They wore matching white, near translucent gowns. Their legs were striped like a Zebras and their feet resembled shiny black hooves.' 'They seemed too physical to be ghosts, they didn't feel alien at all and felt like they were right where they belonged oddly enough. There was something oddly graceful about them despite there being something off about them and their appearance seemed natural despite their legs looking like a hybrid between human and equine.' Fairies are 'something that has lived alongside us and possibly long, long before us. I feel like they are manifestations of the energy of places and can come about in a multitude of ways.'

England (Devon). *Female; 1950s; 0-10; inside a private house; with several other people, none of whom shared my ex-*

perience; 12 AM-3 AM; ten minutes to an hour; no fairy mood reported; occasional supernatural experiences; no special state reported; a sense that the experience was a display put on specially for you, unusually vivid memories of the experience. 'Grey or white bearded, figure similar to depictions of gnomes. He was standing close to my cot playing pan pipes.' Fairies are 'a different race or lifeform. Ancient!' 'I was very young when this happened, probably under five years. I have never forgotten it. I have had psychic experiences.'

Scotland (Lothian). *Female; 1990s; 0-10; in open land (fields etc) 'in a large open park by main road'; with one other person who shared my experience; 6 PM-9 PM; less than a minute; aloof; occasional supernatural experiences; no special state reported; unusually vivid memories of the experience, a sudden chill before the experience.* 'We were walking our dog, a black Labrador who would have been off the lead, at night. I was maybe around seven, so my brother would have been four, and our dad had taken us over. The park is large, around the length of a football field, and bordered by cherry trees. It slopes down almost in giant steps down to a cul-de-sac street, and the other entrance is from the main road. Most of it is open and not enclosed. There would have been some light from the street-lamps but it was evening, probably in winter, so we couldn't see much as I don't think the park itself was lit at this time. If there was anyone else in the park they were on the far side from us.

Looking down at where the hill sloped down to the only building in the park, a small energy building, I saw a large black dog, with ears more like a wolf than our Labrador's. It seemed almost to be a shadow that was in living 3D one moment and the next was part of the shadow on the wall of the building again. I was chilled and thrilled simultaneously, and ruled out it being a werewolf for being too insubstantial but did wonder if it was a mythical black dog and we'd seen an omen. My brother said at the time he'd seen it with me, but at the age he was he tended to go along with whatever I said. On the way home I confirmed with my dad there hadn't been any other large dogs in the park. I was certain that what I'd seen had not been a living dog.' Fairies have 'been gods in the sense that most old gods were a way of looking at a larger than life shadow self to humanity. I don't think much about them but I think anyone trying to cut down a tree that is explicitly a fairy tree is an idiot.' 'I was a huge fantasy and folklore reader as a child and more likely than anyone to read into what I'd seen, but I am certain I saw something.'

England (Lancashire). *Female; 1970s; 0-10; inside a private house; on my own; 6 PM-9 PM; ten minutes to an hour; regular supernatural experiences; mischievous; regular supernatural experiences; you had just woken up or were just about to go to sleep ('I was a child, put to bed but not sleepy'); profound silence before the experience, a sense that the experience was a display*

put on specially for you, unusually vivid memories of the experience, a sense that the experience marked a turning point in your life. 'I was only around four years old but have a lot of memories from being very young. This happened over a series of days, if not weeks and the experiences were all similar. My parents put me to bed in a rear bedroom, probably around eight pm and went downstairs. It was still light in the room. The room used to grow unnaturally still and then I would hear a noise coming from the chimney. A noise as if something was being pulled along stone. I looked over to the fireplace to see a group (three plus) small creatures about a foot or smaller in height. I thought they were puppets and wasn't scared at first. I don't remember a lot about their appearance, they were dirty looking, hairy with large heads, big eyes and odd shaped noses. They did wear clothing but I don't remember much about that, it was how they behaved that stuck in my mind. I didn't think they were strange. I had no prejudices at that age. I was very accepting. When they saw me, they began to point and jabber, then pull ugly faces. I realised these were not nice creatures. I can remember crying. That's when they began to sing, mimicking baby language, 'iddle babba, liddle wabber…' that type of thing. It seemed singing made them slightly crazy for they started to dance around, rhyming nonsense words, pointing at me, laughing, etc. I hid under the bedclothes but could still hear them. Their singing got higher and

higher in pitch, impossibly fast so it was like the buzzing of wasp wings. Then it stopped. I told my parents who said I had dreamed it. Those 'little people' appeared every night for weeks in my room. Often lifting my bed from underneath. It was frightening at the time. I thought they were going to take me away. I have had many strange experiences since.' 'Around eleven inches high. Dirty, hairy, oversized heads, big eyes, large noses.' 'Ordinary singing (higher pitched but mimicking human voice so pitched it lower at one point). Changing to very, very fast and high pitch.' 'Completely different to ghosts as I have had a lot of experience with them. Ghosts are more passive I find (although I have met some angry ones).' These interacted with me. I think they were intrigued as I was a child.' 'Odd as it sounds, I think they opened a portal, a door or window from their place to mine. I have reasons for saying this due to further experiences. Obviously, it didn't occur to me back then. My mother didn't believe me. Yet in later life confessed she had also seen a small gnome like creature jump out from a hedge when she was young.' Fairies are 'Tricky and many different types. I think of them as 'the other crowd'.'

Fairy Interview: Jo Hickey-Hall

Jo Hickey-Hall is a folklorist, researcher and social historian with a long-held interest in the relationship between supernatural experience, local landscape and oral tradition. She runs Modern Fairy Sightings and the Modern Fairy Sightings Podcast. She is currently writing: *Modern Fairy Sightings: Personal Encounters in Extraordinary Times.*

Jo, so good of you to join us! What first got you interested in fairylore?

I think I was very lucky as a child, because my Irish father would make up fantastic stories for me at bedtime. I'm the youngest in the family by far, so I think he had a bit more time on his hands by the time I was born. He was born in 1936 in Mayfield, Cork, which was completely rural at the time. His father, also from Cork, was born in 1888. So the stories my Dad told me sounded a little bit like the locally collated folklore from the 1930s, that you might read on Duchas.ie. They were usually stories about a child who would go playing with their siblings or friends and then somehow lose them and end up at twilight in a rath (Iron Age/Bronze Age ringfort). They might find a dark circle of grass called a 'fairy ring' and despite their families' warnings, ringing in their heads, they would sit down in the fairy ring and then end up going in through the ground and off on adventures. There was always a mystical element and wisdom to be gained from interaction with the Fae. I am so thankful for these tales and I can only imagine what sort of dreams I must have had! Dad was pretty cool. I am still not certain where he got the tales from and since he sadly passed ten years ago, I now can't ask him, though I always feel him near through the work that I'm doing.

Was their fairy reading?

As a very young child, we had a copy of Hilda Boswell's *Omnibus: A Treasury of Favourites* (1972) which was richly illustrated throughout, with the kind of hand drawn detail that you rarely see in children's books these days. It was full of stories and poems which were all incredibly formative for me, like Nathaniel Hawthorne's version of *The Snow Child*. And then of course, there was Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree*…

I was a big fan too!

…and the Enchanted Wood. I still have my original 1960s hardback, which was probably my elder sister's before me. I adored these stories, they really capture the imagination and take you off to another world. Admittedly, there are a number of issues to navigate within those tales, including blatant racism, sexism and xenophobia. I change/omit the problematic characters/situations when reading to my youngest (five) but sometimes, where she has the capacity to understand, we take the opportunity to discuss and challenge those elements within the storyline.

Anything else?

I enjoyed all the traditional old fairytales, like Sleeping Beauty, Red Riding Hood and The Princess and the Pea, as a kid, but I was never 'into' Tinker Bell-type fairy stories. Though, I loved leafing through my mum's copy of Mary Cicely Barker's *Flower Fairies* and making up poems in a similar style. As I got towards ten or eleven, I very much enjoyed anything to do with the unexplained: UFOs, The Marie Celeste, and 'The Abominable Snowman' (as 'he' was known back in the 1980s), all of which I feel is akin to the type of 'fairylore' that I enjoy reading now. I particularly remember reading an entry in my *Fascinating Facts!* book, about someone disappearing into thin air, while standing in a circle of green grass in their front garden...so, given my Dad's bedtime stories, that spoke to me. It wasn't until I came to studying the Medieval Irish *sidhe* for my Masters in History that I came into contact with the likes of Evans-Wentz, Thomas Crofton Croker, and Lady Wilde for example.

You took this to a whole other level by founding the Modern Fairy Sightings survey, I think back in 2016? Can you tell us about what decided you on this and what makes the survey different?

It came about very organically (as most of the important things in life tend to do!). I'd joined the Folklore Society as part of my History Masters studies, and was researching the Medieval *sidhe* under the supervision of Professor Ronald Hutton. I had actually planned to study all I could about ritual ceremonies in sacred landscapes but he suggested the *sidhe* and as my Dad had just passed over, one month before I moved from Jersey to Bristol to begin my Masters, it felt rather fated. Professor Hutton had no idea at the time that I'd had a fairy experience, some seven years previous. I then met researcher Mark Norman at the Newer Researchers Conference (an offshoot) of The Folklore Society and he asked me to aid him in the chapter for Devon for that magnificent book, *Magical Folk: British and Irish Fairies* edited of course by yourself and Ceri Houlbrook. So it was pure chance that I got to dig deeper into the folklore of Devon and in doing so, we began to ask local people about their contemporary encounters.

So good to know that book helped start something!

Well, once back from Devon, I set up The Modern Fairy Sightings Project as a Facebook Group and it really grew from there. The difference with this Project, is that it's a safe space for people to talk with others, without being ridiculed and without it being some kind of entertaining spectacle for non-believers. I'm firm that if anyone is

found being disrespectful or dismissive of other people's personal experiences, then they are immediately removed from the group. I operate a zero-tolerance policy because, quite frankly, it's probably just not the right group for those people.

I've heard of lots of these kinds of problems on Facebook groups. What about the Modern Fairy Sightings Podcast.

I'd say the Podcast, which again, came about organically during what seemed like directive meditative enlightenments in early lock-down, is an extension of that…People can now hear each other's experiences first-hand and decide for themselves what they think and feel about that. You can really tune into someone's story when they are speaking. Often they experience further realisations, as we gently explore the resonances of the encounter with aspects of their lives. Hearing these insights are a lifeline for people like me, who have had these encounters and hardly ever meet others who have had them too. It's such a huge relief to be able to exchange what it's like to come into contact with The Unseen. Most importantly, it gives us a chance to look at how these experiences take effect in our lives afterwards. Usually there are important transitions and expansions in personal understandings and/or deepening relationships with nature.

So a couple of questions around the podcast. For me the podcast has a feel like no other. What for you makes it so special?

I'm not sure. It has its own momentum and quality that, I feel, is beyond me. It's all about the wonderful guests that come on board, to courageously tell their stories. I regularly check-in *via* meditation at home or when walking in nature or visiting a sacred place and I will ask for an indication that what I'm doing is 'permitted' and 'ok' with the Fair Folk. Because, as we're warned throughout the folklore, you do not want to upset the fairies. Up to the present time, it feels right to continue with the Project. I'm often guided off to research specific areas, that seem to arise through multiple synchronicities (for example, several people might contact me that day/week with similar themes and/or even reporting the same type of being). At some point that sense of 'permission' may change and the flow may ebb away and I will know that I'll need to wrap things up. I realise this is a very different way of working in say, academia or indeed in a corporate Podcast. This Project wouldn't work under the kind of constraints you find in those environments. Instead, it organically goes where it wants to go, and I do my best to follow. In that way, this Project feels like a vocation.

As someone who sometimes does interviews and podcast, I wonder, do you feel that it has helped you grow as a person? Have you got better at it?

With each new guest I gain another level of understanding, so hopefully I'm getting better over time in being able to reference other encounters or relevant folklore. In interview terms, I find it really hard to not jump in and get involved! Because a lot of what my guests are describing I can absolutely relate to and we're back to that fundamental sense of 'oh yeah!! me too!', because it's simply delightful to meet another human being who knows what that's like. So, I do try to hold back these days. In the beginning, I just cut most of my responses out of the edit. But over time I felt more relaxed revealing more about my own experiences. Then I think it probably went through a stage of me talking too much! So now I try to balance the conversation and the edits. That's hard, because sometimes the part you edit out might be the part that someone really needed to hear. I am training as a core process psychotherapist at the moment and that's a very different approach. You would certainly never suggest anything to a therapy client about their own story. But actually, the interviewing for the podcast is very similar to when I give healing appointments. I'm listening on many different levels. There's the folkloric layer, then the reported felt-experience in the guest's body – this provides clues as I read

the body as a map of our consciousness. The territory of childhood experiences (which I had myself) feels instinctually familiar to me so I feel I learn a lot personally, from those types of encounters. When I'm listening to the experiencer, I am also receiving information intuitively, in the same way as in a healing appointment. It can be felt in my own body as sensations or tensions, I also can sometimes feel as if I am literally tuning into their experience. I trust that more nowadays, so perhaps the interviews are deepening in some ways. That might not be everyone's bag, but that's ok.

The episodes are often radically different from one another. Can you pick out, perhaps for anyone who is thinking of listening for the first time, a couple of your favourite episodes and explain why?

Yeah, as I say, I'm following the flow of wherever the Project is being led at the time. I don't release them in chronological order. Sometimes I've had episodes sit for a long time before they are released (I do let the person know that this happens). It's always clear when it's the right time for them to be heard though. Sometimes the episodes feel lighter and more folkloric – themes that most people can generally relate to, or at least feel more comfortable relating to. Then, other times we go down some darker alleys. These ones are often my favourites because

the person usually receives some kind of important truth or transition as a result.

And a favourite?

I honestly love all of the episodes for different reasons and it warms my heart to recall chatting to all these amazing, warm-hearted people. However, I always say that one of my all time favourites is Episode 4, 'Mysterious Illuminations' because the guy was due to speak to me about a strange light experience in his bedroom and then he came out with a side story about this tree being that he saw (along with his friend who saw it too) in the woods near his home. It blew my mind because I had also seen one in Jersey years before (along with two other witnesses, we watched it run down a beach – very bizarre!). I'd never met anyone that had seen one of these too. It was very moving for me. In the released episode, I'd cut out all my own responses and our conversation around that but I actually shared that original unedited conversation on my Patreon supporters online group last year, in a special bonus episode about tree beings.

Any others?

Episode 9, 'The Tall Folk and the Little People' is also a fave, because the Irish woman in the story is so used to

seeing these beings and she's very matter-of-fact about how the community just acknowledges their presence… meanwhile, this guy is there trying to get his head around the fact that he's encountered tall dark guardian folk and has had to flee a mountain at night after watching little people dancing in a ring before his eyes. The more recent episodes are packed with my favourites too. I could name any of them but the latest episode 82, 'The Puppets are Coming for Me' was very moving. It left me with a lot of questions about fairies and spirits. It's also a childhood experience and there was something eerily familiar about the use of chanting/song in (possibly) inducing an altered state.

Jo, thanks so much! We always ask as our last question about your fairy reading. If you could choose, say, just three or four fairy books for your desert island what would you take with you?

Well, I'd have to say *Seeing Fairies,* and not just because that's one of yours Simon. It's a treasure trove of experiences that people have shared freely. I truly admire Marjorie T. Johnson – a woman after my own heart. *Daimonic Reality* by Patrick Harpur, is a marvellous book and so well written. Harpur does a great job of not only providing a different perspective on these encounters but also gently encourages awareness around the way we have 'closed

ourselves down' over the centuries. I felt very honoured when Patrick came on and chatted to me in Episode 67. *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, is an absolute classic, packed full of first hand encounters, largely from the 19th century. I love that some of them are from local priests. And on that note, I cannot leave out Dermot MacManus's *The Middle Kingdom: The Faerie World of Ireland* (1973) Each story, was related by someone MacManus either knew was still alive or could vouch for their authenticity. They include some of my favourite encounters and I feel heavy with sorrow when I read it because it seems to trace those remaining years in Ireland, in the middle of the twentieth century when people, like my Dad, still knew. And now many of those good people have forgotten too.

Article: The Fairy Flag of Dunvegan

J. S. Mackley

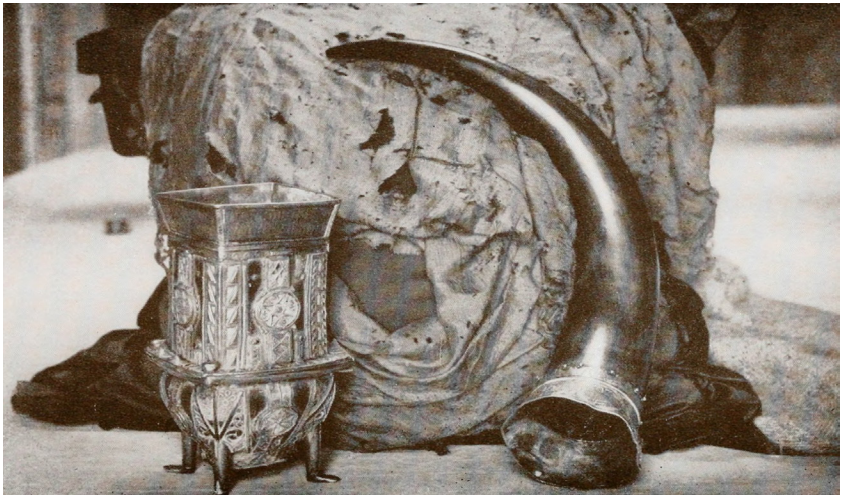
Introduction

The Isle of Skye is the most northern island of the Inner Hebrides lying off the western coast of Scotland. The dramatic landscape of the Cuillan mountains, the land's ancient heritage, and its Gaelic name – *Eilean a' Cheòm*, the Isle of Mist – all provide a fertile environment for supernatural legends to germinate. John Gunn Mackay notes that on Skye superstitious belief still 'entered largely into the life of its people' at the start of the nineteenth century, particularly the 'many Fairy Knolls … all over the island and each has its own tales of the little men and their wonderful doings' (Mackay 1914–1919 273). Today visitors can see the Fairy Pools near Glenbrittle (a series of cascades from the Black Cuillan mountains) and the ethereal landscape of the Fairy Glen near Uig, where stories about fairies have been woven into local legend. One of the most prominent of these is that of the Fairy Flag (the Gaelic name is *Am Bratach Sith*), an artefact belonging to Clan MacLeod held at Dunvegan Castle. This study will consider the history

and some of the legends of the flag and the tradition that it may be unfurled or waved on three occasions to protect the Clan.

Built in the thirteenth century and greatly redeveloped in the nineteenth century in a mock medieval style, Dunvegan Castle is the seat of the chief of Clan MacLeod. The relics held in the castle include the ceremonial Dunvegan cup, Sir Rory Mor's Horn (a drinking vessel made from an ox horn), and the Fairy Flag which is currently on display in the drawing room. Mackay suggests the Fairy Flag of the MacLeods is 'without exception the most interesting of all the clan banners, both from its age and from the traditions connected with it' (Mackay 1919–1924 128–29). Descriptions of the original flag vary and are drawn from oral histories or the Bannatyne manuscript, which is an account of the clan written up between 1829–1957.* Writing in the early twentieth century, Fred MacLeod observes the true origins of the flag are lost in 'the obscurity of Highland mist' (F. MacLeod 111); however, the oral tales circulated about the flag and the memoirs of visitors to Dunvegan Castle, particularly in the nineteenth century, allow us to construct a picture of the suggested origins and the powers of the Fairy Flag.

* Rev. Roderick MacLeod (1794–1868) argues the information was gathered by Sir William MacLeod Bannatyne (1744–1838) and then written up by Dr Bannatyne William MacLeod (c.1790–1857) between 1829–57 (R. MacLeod xi–xiii; Sutherland 143 n.60).



The Dunvegan cup, Sir Rory Mor's Horn, and the Fairy Flag (before 1927). Photography by R.C. MacLeod, published in Roderick Charles MacLeod, *The MacLeods of Dunvegan* (Edinburgh: Privately printed for the Clan MacLeod Society, 1927).

Description

According to legend, the flag may be waved or unfurled on three occasions to assist Clan MacLeod in times of dire need. There are varying accounts of when the flag has been used and for what purpose – these will be discussed later. The flag itself is a piece of fragile, yellow or brown silk measuring approximately forty-five centimetres by thirty centimetres (slightly larger than a sheet of A3 paper). The fabric is tattered so only one side has a regular seam, and even this is incomplete. Despite the assurance that the flag could be used on three occasions, the folklorist J. A. MacCulloch, writing in 1905, described the flag's material as being 'threadbare, so that it cannot ever be

waved a third time, and even a fairy might scarcely touch it without tearing it' (MacCulloch 76).

The remains of the Fairy Flag of Clan Macleod. © Dunvegan Castle & Gardens

A letter from Rev. Norman MacLeod (1783–1862) describes his memories of seeing the flag in 1799 from when he was aged around thirteen years old. Norman explains the flag was stored in a box of 'strongly-scented wood' or an iron chest which had to be 'forced open' by a smith. He describes the flag as 'a square piece of very rich silk, with

crosses wrought with gold thread, and several elf-spots stitched with great care upon it' (R. MacLeod 112; Mackenzie 48). Sir Walter Scott, following a visit to Dunvegan Castle in 1841, describes the flag and particularly the elf-spots as 'a pennon of silk, with something like round red rowan-berries wrought upon it' (Lockhart 227). Likewise John Gregorson Campbell, a scholar of Gaelic tradition and folklore who saw the flag in 1871, describes 'figures and spots worked on in red'.* Campbell continues, describing the 'odd and uncanny' feelings he experienced when seeing the flag, although he admits he did not see the 'legions of imps' he had expected when the flag was unfurled (Black 294).

Lewis Spence says the silken fabric retains the flag's 'ivory tint' (Spence 212). Norman MacLeod suggests the flag had once been much bigger and he expressed his concern that parts of the flag had been removed, perhaps as tokens of good fortune (R. MacLeod 195). When Roderick published his description of the flag in 1927, he noted the elf-spots are still visible on the material, but the golden thread crosses are no longer there, and some of the tears have been mended with red thread (*bid*. 195).

* Unfortunately, no one elaborates on why these spots were called 'elf-spots'.

The Flag's Provenance: The Crusades and Scandinavia

While clan tradition holds that the flag was received towards the end of the fourteenth century (R. MacLeod 195), there are several traditions as to the flag's origins, both plausible and supernatural – it *is* a fairy flag, after all. The first, as recounted by Roderick MacLeod, is that the flag was brought to Britain by one of his ancestors returning from the crusades, and this also links with the fairy tradition. He explains the crusader was involved in a mission in which he was captured by a witch. He subsequently escapes and has to overcome a fairy maiden who blocks him at a ford. By the end of the encounter, the crusader and the fairy become friends and she presents him with a gift: a *scented* box which contains the flag. He is told the flag 'would bring forth a host of armed men to help its owner' but he is instructed not to open it for a year and a day: 'If you do, for another year and a day no crops will grow in your land, no sheep or cattle will produce their young, no children will be born' (R. MacLeod 199). Thus, the punishment for opening the box prematurely parallels with both the temptation motif seen in the Pandora and the Original Sin myths, and the threat of a blight is a variation of the folkloric 'infertility curse' (Spence 212). The flag later becomes a superstition linked to the fear that any pregnant woman who sees it is taken in premature labour which

is what happened to the chief's wife following the opening of the box in 1799: Lady MacLeod was pregnant, and gave birth immediately on seeing the flag (Black 3; Mackay 1919–1924 133). Weaving this tradition into the wider fairy legends of Dunvegan is unusual. As Dilling points out, there is cultural evidence of belief in a girdle being used as a fertility charm, to help pregnant women, and for new mothers 'to attach good spiritual powers' to their newborn infant (Dilling 347, 403, 423). However, as will be discussed below, the fairy flag is also linked to the protection of the Clan's infant heir. This version of the story also has a ring of truth about it as the 'scented box' parallels Norman MacLeod's description of the box which he saw in 1799 in which the flag is stored.

Another story featuring a crusader appears in the Bannatyne manuscript: a hermit offers shelter to the returning crusader but warns him of an evil spirit, 'the Daughter of Thunder'. The crusader defeats this 'She Devil' with the aid of a piece of the True Cross, echoing the conflict between Christianity and old superstitious beliefs which is often a subtext in folklore tales (Mackay 1914–1919 274). Before she dies, the spirit reveals the destinies of the clan to the crusader, and tells him to make a banner from her girdle (or belt) and a staff from her spear (F. MacLeod 112). In legends such as 'The Blue Belt' from Norse mythology, the wearing of an enchanted girdle increases the wear-

er's strength (Dasent 155). Although the root of this story contains supernatural elements, it possibly provides evidence of the flag's country of origin. Sir Roderick repeats an assertion from Bannatyne: 'It is thought probably that the banner was really brought from the East by some valiant crusader' (R. MacLeod 199); Fred MacLeod agrees, suggesting it may have been a spoil of war captured from Danish invaders (F. MacLeod 109).

An alternative tradition is that the flag is of Scandinavian origin. Writing in 1772, the Welsh antiquarian, Thomas Pennant, observed the clan's 'Norwegian ancestry' and drew parallels to the legend of the Norse hero Sigurd. Here, three standard-bearers carry Sigurd's enchanted flag into battle. They are killed in the combat, but after the death of the last, Sigurd's army is victorious (Pennant 339–40). Pennant says Titania named the Fairy Flag *brauolauch shi* and her blessing allowed it to be used on three occasions. After its third usage, the legend warns 'an invisible being is said to arrive and carry off standard and standard-bearer, never more to be seen' (Pennant 339). Consequently, 'a family of *Clan y Faitter* had this dangerous office' (presumably 'loyal kinsmen') for which they were rewarded with lands in Bracadale on the western coast of Skye (*ibid*. 340). Roderick MacLeod notes that, historically, when a standard-bearer was killed in battle, 'the greatest possible honour was paid to his remains' and

the standard bearers were buried in a single grave where their remains could mingle with their predecessors (R. MacLeod 74).

A more scientific study of the origins of the fairy flag material was undertaken in 1922 by Alan John Bayard Wace, the Deputy Keeper in the Department of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Wace examined the artefact when it was being sealed in a glass frame for conservation. He noted that the material is woven silk from either Syria or Rhodes dating from between the third and seventh centuries (J. MacLeod 35). He further posited that the Norseman Harald Hardrada – an ancestor of Leod, first chief of Clan MacLeod – brought the flag to England after plundering Middle Eastern pilgrim routes in the eleventh century, calling it *Landøyðan*, or 'Land Ravager'. Harald Hardrada had intended to use the flag's powers when he met Harald II (Godwinson) in battle at Stamford Bridge in September 1066, but it failed to completely unfurl and unleash its powers. Harald Hardrada was killed, and the flag was taken as a spoil of war and was not heard of until it was noted amongst the relics held by the Clan at Dunvegan. Clearly Harald Godwinson did not employ the flag's powers when he met William of Normandy in battle at Senlac Hill in the following month. This hypothesis draws together the ideas of the flag having links with both the crusades (or being of Middle Eastern origin) and

the clan's Scandinavian heritage. Wace also posited that it could have been fashioned from a garment that was a relic of an early saint before it was a flag. However, despite Wace's findings, Sir Reginald MacLeod (twenty-seventh chief) bluntly told him 'You may believe that, but I know that it was given to my ancestor by the fairies' and Wace bowed to Sir Reginald's 'superior knowledge' (J. MacLeod 42; Cooper 87; Black 294).

These are the traditional explanations of the Flag's provenance; however, as would be expected, the flag also has legendary explanations which developed through oral tales and local legend to describe its supernatural origins.

The Flag's Provenance: A Gift from the fairies

When Sir Reginald MacLeod declared to Wace that his ancestor received the flag from a fairy, he was referring to one of three traditions of a MacLeod chief marrying a fairy. According to one legend, she gave him the flag at the Fairy Bridge – a structure some three miles away from Dunvegan which still remains – when she was forced to leave him after twenty years. She promised a fairy would aid the clan on the three occasions the flag was unfurled (R. MacLeod 196). Gibson notes the fairy's departure from a marriage is a common trope and the location of the

fairy bridge is a liminal point which is in keeping with the passing of a supernatural entity from this world to the otherworld (Gibson 358). A second version of the legend appears in Fred MacLeod's study where the marriage is 'limited' to twenty years and the flag was part of her 'silken attire' dropped in her 'flight' (F. MacLeod 109).* The difference between these two stories is subtle, but crucial. If the Chief was *given* the flag, it would mean it was *intended* the clan should benefit from its magical powers. If it was dropped, then the fairy's flight suggests she left because the chief had performed some transgression or violated some prohibition which necessitated her departure, and thus it was not intended that Clan MacLeod would have access to supernatural powers. The same is true of the two versions of the crusader story: assuming the fairy maiden at the ford and the 'She Devil' represent the same character, we once again have a question as to whether the flag was willingly given or taken by force. Of course, the fairy married to the MacLeod chief *must* leave because, as Nicola Bown observes, fairies belong to a time before the loss of innocence: 'Fairies always belong to yesterday, because today's world is corrupt, sophisticated, urbane and disenchanted' (Bown 163).

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* Fred MacLeod's 1915 publication is citing a story that Roderick Charles MacLeod heard in his childhood; however, Roderick MacLeod is the author of the 1927 study and his details differ from those presented by Fred.

Fairy Bridge, near Dunvegan, Isle of Skye. © Copyright Photo 257915792; Fairy Bridge Skye ©Fotokev; Dreamstime.com

In a third version of the fairy marriage story, the Clan chief goes with the fairy to her home in Fairyland, and it is he who remains with her for twenty years. However, he decides to leave her and return to his clan. She follows him as far as the Fairy Bridge and gives him the Fairy Flag as a departing gift. This legend has parallels with the ballad of Thomas of Erceldoune, who is taken to Fairyland and marries the fairy queen, staying with her for several years (even though he believes that only days have passed). When Thomas returns to his own realm, he asks for a token by which he may remember his bride and she gives him the gift of prophecy (Murray 17–19).

Roderick MacLeod links the legend of the fairy marriage with another where a fairy visited the infant heir to the chief and sang a lullaby to him. This lullaby was 'impressed' upon the nurse's memory and brought comfort and protection to the heir. The lullaby also emphasises the Scandinavian heritage of the clan in the final line: the heir's 'father's native land was Scandinavia' (R. MacLeod 198). Curiously, this legend refers only to the protective relationship the fairies have with the clan. It does not mention the flag itself. It is in a later tradition which includes a celebration of the birth of the next Clan heir. The nurse wanted to see the celebrations, leaving the baby unattended, and the baby's blanket fell from him. Consequently, the fairies wrapped the child in the flag which amazed the clansmen when the heir was brought to them, and the clansmen heard an invisible fairy choir singing of the flag's powers (F. MacLeod 110; R. MacLeod 200). The tower where the infant was sleeping is still called the 'Fairy Tower'. However, the incident of the fairies tending the infant is unsettling considering the normal action of a fairy is to steal the child and leave a changeling in their place.

Thus, there are many traditions concerning the flag's origin, whether it had been brought over to England by Harald Hardrada or a crusader, or given to a clan chief by his fairy wife, or used to swaddle the infant clan heir.

In addition, there are also numerous descriptions about how the clan have used it and the properties with which it is imbued. Some commentaries say it has been used twice, others say it has been three occasions, and others still describe the flag as providing permanent magical protection for the clan.

Unfurling the Flag

Thomas Pennant discusses three occasions when the flag was used: the first was when Clan MacLeod was outnumbered in a battle against Clan Ranald; when the flag was waved on this occasion, the MacLeod army was 'multiplied ten-fold'; on the second occasion it 'preserved the heir of the family, being produced to save the longings of the lady'; and on the third, 'to save my own' (Pennant 340). These last two instances are unclear. However, writing his memoirs of his visit to Dunvegan in 1814, Sir Walter Scott listed the flag's three magical properties: 'Produced in battle, it multiplied the numbers of the MacLeods –spread on a nuptial bed, it ensured fertility – and lastly, it brought herring back to the loch' (Scott 228). Scott's description of the flag's powers may well be an embellishment of those written by Pennant. Of course, in the cases of ensuring fertility and a plentiful stock of fish, the efficacy of the flag's magical properties cannot be tested. Nor does Scott's account suggest it is

necessary for the flag to be unfurled or waved, and there is no apparent limitation on its powers. It is capable of producing these effects and will continue while the clan possesses the flag.

The Bannatyne manuscript describes how the flag was frequently *carried* into battle during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was fiercely protected on the battlefield as its loss would have dealt a major blow to morale. It is disputed how many times the flag has been waved. According to Bannantyne, tradition holds that these occasions were at the Battle of the Bloody Bay (1480), the Battle of Glendale (1490) or the battle at Waternish (*c.* 1580). Another suggested occasion is that the flag's powers were used to prevent a cattle plague, or at a time of potato famine (Black 3, 294).

In 1480, an army from Clan MacDonald landed at Aird Bay while William, the MacLeod chief was away; Clan MacDonald was led by Evan MacKail, son of the Clan Ranald chief, the MacLeods were led by William's son, Alexander. Evan wounded Alexander in the conflict, but, Alexander, in turn, stabbed and killed Evan. This was followed by a sea battle in which William was killed. The MacLeods were demoralised by the death of their chief but were then 'immensely excited' by the sight of the Fairy Flag (R. MacLeod 71). At Glendale, the MacDonalds of Sleat and of

Clan Ranald fought against the MacLeods of Dunvegan and of Lewis; The Bannantyne manuscript describes it as 'the most tremendous battle in which the MacLeods were ever engaged'. Despite the MacDonalds' initial successes, the MacLeods were victorious once the flag was unfurled (R. MacLeod 72–74). In 1580, an invading force from Clan MacDonald landed at Waternish, burnt the church at Trumpan, and murdered the worshippers. Caught by surprise, the clan chief was unable to muster sufficient numbers to repel the invasion. Consequently, the flag was unfurled whereupon 'the MacDonalds were seized with a panic, imagining they saw large reinforcements coming to MacLeod's assistance' (Mackay 1919–1924 129).

Roderick MacLeod favours the suggestions the flag was unfurled only twice, at Glendale and Waternish, observing the 'appalling' losses at the Battle of the Bloody Bay, and unfurling the flag 'did not turn defeat into victory'. He also observes the details regarding the cattle plague are 'so very vague' and perhaps correspond with Walter Scott's mention of the flag's powers ensuring the loch would always be full of herring. Roderick also notes that the flag might also have been usefully employed during the last war with the MacDonalds of Sleat around 1600 (R. MacLeod 199–200). However, the belief, as recounted in the Bannatyne, is that the flag's third display would bring about 'complete victory by the clan over their foes or their

total extinction forever' (F. MacLeod 199–201). Roderick cites events which were prophesied in the sixteenth century by 'Dark' Kenneth Mackenzie, the Brahan Seer, or *Coinneach Odhar*, who predicted that 'when the fairy enchanted banner should be for the last time exhibited, then the glory of the MacLeod family should depart' (Mackenzie 48). The disasters prophesied by Odhar, including the death of the 'promising heir' of MacLeod and the sale of land with rocks knowns as MacLeod's Maidens, came to pass immediately after Norman MacLeod saw the flag in the scented box in 1799 (R. MacLeod 111–13).

In more superstitious times, the tradition of the clan's supernatural protection may have served as a psychological advantage over their adversaries in times of battle. In addition, Clan MacLeod's victories may also be linked to the folklore trope of a garter increasing the wearer's strength, as mentioned above in relation to the Norse hero Sigurd. The concept of the fairies aiding when the clan most needs them is akin to the *return* trope seen in many legends, for example, King Arthur's promise of a messianic return when his people most need him. Most legendary strands concerning the Fairy Flag suggest it has only been used twice, and, as MacCulloch observes, the flag is so fragile it would not survive a third unfurling. Indeed, Thomas Pennant claims the flag, blessed by Titania, had, in fact, been used three times. While legend

claims that the flag and its bearer could have been carried away by an invisible being 'never more to be seen', Pennant suggests that flag was discovered to be 'so tattered' by the end of the eighteenth century, and posited that the fairy queen 'did not seem to think it worth sending for' (Pennant 339–40).

Conclusion

While the legend of the Fairy Flag may be colourful, it is a remarkable artefact which is between 1400 and 1800 years old. It has been in the possession of Clad MacLeod for many centuries and imbued with supernatural significance. Whether it was a spoil of war brought over by a crusader, or taken from a spirit, or perhaps given by a fairy to wrap up the infant future chief, or a gift to the fairy's husband, we shall never know. Nor can we know for certain how often the flag has been unfurled, and its magical properties employed. However, the popular belief is that it can be used just once more. Is this simply a superstitious belief held by the gullible? In 1939, when a fire broke out at Dunvegan Castle, it is recorded that the flames subsided once the flag was carried to safety. Also, during the Second World War, RAF servicemen carried a picture of the flag with them as they flew (J. MacLeod 42). This was clearly an occasion where Britain was facing her darkest times and the country could have benefitted

from a helping of fairy magic. It is claimed that Dame Flora MacLeod, the twenty-eighth chief, offered to unfurl the flag at the white cliffs of Dover if Britain was in imminent danger of invasion. Given the prophecy that the clan would either achieve 'complete victory … or their total extinction forever', perhaps it is just as well that the secrets of the final unfurling of the Fairy Flag of Dunvegan remain unknown and, like the battles when the flag was used as a standard, the *threat* of fairy magic is enough.

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Article: Seeing the Unseeable: The Role of Clairvoyance in the Cottingley Story

Neil Rushton[*]

Photographing Fairies

In the 1997 film *Photographing Fairies* (based on the 1992 novel by Steve Szilagyi[†], and set shortly after World War One, there is a scene where the main protagonist, Charles Castle (played by Toby Stephens), bursts in to a meeting of the Theosophical Society where Edward Gardner (Clive Merrison) is showing a slide of one of the Cottingley photographs as proof of the existence of faeries.[‡] Castle pro-

* Neil has kindly agreed to publish this article in the newsletter. It will appear in a forthcoming Pwca collection T*he Cottingley Fairy Photographs: New Approaches to Fairies, Fakes and Folklore* neil.rushton13@cantab.net, https://deadbutdreaming.wordpress.com/.

† Steve Szilagyi, *Photographing Fairies* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992).

‡ A detailed analysis of the film can be found in: Neil Rushton, 'Handmaidens of the Eternal: Consciousness and Death in Photographing Fairies', in *Fairy Films: Wee Folk on the Big Screen*, ed. Joshua Cutchin (Edu-

ceeds to demonstrate that the image is a fallacy, and that the faeries are quite evidently cardboard cut-outs. His intervention breaks up the meeting and we are introduced to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Edward Hardwicke), a member of the society, who extends some words of solace to Gardner and the audience: 'We're travelling in the dark. We must expect to bark our shins now and again. We are pioneers exploring the borderland between this world and a better one.' In this three-minute scene the Cottingley story, and the involvement of Gardner and Doyle, is distilled and made to seem preposterous. The photographs are quite evidently fake and, seen from the rationalist perspective of Charles Castle, the Theosophist belief in such supernatural entities is deemed ridiculous - a refuge of naive superstition. The rest of the film is concerned with overturning this viewpoint, as Castle discovers that photographs taken by two other girls appear to show real humanoid – faerie – entities. He travels to their village and proceeds in an attempt to photograph the faeries, but only succeeds in encountering them whilst in an altered state of consciousness brought about by the consumption of a mysterious white flower.

While the film is not about the Cottingley faeries, it is quite evidently using the trope of the story (as was Szi-

cated Dragon Publishing, 2023).

lagyl's novel) to create the narrative. When Castle travels to the village he encounters the girls Ana and Clara – patently representatives of Elsie and Frances (although they are sisters in the book and film); they are several years apart and seem to spend much of their time communing with nature (in the film a woodland rather than the beck at Cottingley). What the film so skilfully depicts is the nature of interaction with the faeries – they can only be perceived during an altered state of consciousness, brought about by the consumption of the white flower. The photographic equipment Castle brings to the woodland to capture images of the faeries never really works – they can only be truly seen once the consciousnesses of the girls and Castle are in the correct state for it to happen. Whilst the relationship of photographic images depicting faeries in the film is very different to what happened at Cottingley, there is, in the film, an intuitive (explicate or implicate) portrayal of human consciousness being able, under certain circumstances, to see the unseeable, and that capturing the unseeable on photographic plates may or may not be possible. The white flower is a proxy for this to happen, an artistic device to render altered states of consciousness. But in the early twentieth century the ability to discern non-human intelligent entities such as the faeries was known simply as *clairvoyance*. It has become an unfashionable word, but its intrinsic meaning was well understood at the time of the events at Cottingley, and

there seem to have been at least two people engaged in clairvoyant activity in the beck.

Frances Griffiths

Frances Griffiths was nine years old when she arrived in Cottingley in the Spring of 1917, after spending most of her prior life in South Africa. In her memoirs, written over sixty years later, she makes light of what must have been a dramatic, and potentially traumatic, change in her life.* But she was an outsider in a strange environment, suddenly finding herself lodged in a bedroom with her older cousin Elsie and having to adjust to a cold, extended Yorkshire winter. Whilst the contents of a memoir written so long after the events it describes needs to be treated with caution, it does seem to have been compiled from earlier written reminiscences, and there is a consistency in Frances' description of events that seem relatively authentic. Within fourteen pages she is already describing how she first saw a faerie-type entity in Cottingley Beck:

> I suppose I must have been day dreaming one day when I looked across the beck and saw a willow leaf twirling around rapidly, moving as it were, on its own… I had never seen a leaf do that before, but then everything here was new to me… That was the begin-

* Frances Griffiths and Christine Lynch, *Reflections on the Cottingley Fairies* (Belfast: JMJ, 2009).

> ning, although at the time I didn't realise it. The leaf was being held by a little man. The first time I saw the little man – he was about eighteen inches high – he was walking purposefully down the bank on the willow side of the beck, holding a willow leaf in his hand, twiddling it very fast as he crossed the water to the other side.*

The *day dreaming* element of Frances' description is important in relation to the nature of clairvoyance, and how this type of altered state of consciousness may be an access-point to potentially numinous experiences. Frances was in a new environment, and the beck probably seemed quite magical as spring broke through it. For a few weeks she had it mostly to herself as Elsie was working during the days, and it seems that she continued to see faerie-type entities. Frances suggests they would notice her, and look at her, but there was never any audial communication. The only sound she describes is 'a high-pitched sound, similar to a ringing in one's ear.' Other than this the encounters were visual only and seem to describe the same entities over a period of time. The original 'little man' was soon joined by a number of compatriots:

* Griffiths, *Reflections*, 14.

> Once I saw him leading three or four little men who were dressed as he was, in green jerkin and darker-coloured green loose-fitting tights – rather like our young people wear their Levis today! They all walked very purposefully and when they had crossed the beck they turned towards the right. I watched them until they went behind a clump of willow herb and were lost from sight.*

Apart from the little men, Frances also described 'conventional faeries', although she never explained exactly what these were. The insinuation is that they were the winged faeries depicted in the photographs. Interestingly, Frances never describes seeing the faeries with Elsie. Her language about this is often ambiguous, such as when she talks of the adults teasing both of them about seeing faeries, suggesting that Elsie was also seeing Frances' entities. But there is no explicit reference in Frances' memoirs or later interviews that she and Elsie saw the faeries together. In a letter to Gardner, Elsie repeats a line she had used in several interviews, that the images were 'photographs of figments of our imagination' – a cleverly worded sidestep in itself that could be interpreted several ways.† But in the same letter she writes that Frances was angry with the

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* Griffiths, *Reflections*, 15.

† Joe Cooper, *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies* (London: Pocket Books, 1997), 196.

phrase, and had castigated Elsie, asking: 'What did you say that for? You know very well they [the faeries] were real.' If Elsie had not seen the faeries with Frances, why would Frances be so annoyed at Elsie's ambiguous words? Perhaps Frances simply expected Elsie to accept her own encounters with the faeries. But it does seem that Elsie was at least with Frances in the beck when the younger girl saw faeries.

They were certainly together to take all the photographs in 1917 and 1920, including the final *fifth photograph*, which is perhaps the most interesting of the set, as it wasn't contrived by Elsie, and seems to have been taken by Frances at the end of a wet day wandering around the beck, with both girls worrying about the responses of Gardner and Doyle to the previous photographs. Frances describes seeing a bird's nest on the ground:

> My camera was loaded and the plate ready for taking, and on an impulse I pointed the lens towards the bird's nest, pulled out the bellows and took a 5 second – I think – shot. It was done without a thought… That was the fifth photograph.*

* Griffiths, *Reflections*, 58.

This photograph is very different than the other four and does seem to show amorphous humanoid entities, although this might be put down to pareidolia, or even a double exposure with blurred images from Elsie's cut outs. Either way, the fifth photograph may be seen as a better representation of the types of entities Frances described as seeing in the beck between 1917 and 1920. But, in Frances' own words, she thought the photographs – and what they may or not prove, and whether they were faked or not – less important than her own real psychic experiences:

> This is where I feel angry with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edward Gardner. They never sought for any explanation of fairy life. It was enough that they could get the copyright for the photographs we took, and later use them on world tours lecturing on something neither they – nor I – knew anything about. If they had only suggested some ways of finding out more about 'my' little men and the fairies, who knows what might have been discovered![*]

Geoffrey Hodson

In the Summer of 1921 the girls were redrafted in to a new investigation at the beck as Edward Gardner turned up

* Ibid, 16.

in Cottingley with a new camera and plates. Shortly after, on 6 August, Geoffrey Hodson (along with his wife) came to the village in order to undertake further psychic appraisals.* Hodson had been chosen by Conan Doyle for the task, and seems to have been, at that time, an upcoming member of the Theosophical Society, with clairvoyant abilities.† Hodson was thirty-five and had been involved in action as a Tank Commander in the Tank Corps during the final days of WWI, just three years previously in 1918.‡ Hodson spent two weeks at Cottingley with the girls and reported back to Conan Doyle on his experiences, which were then edited in to chapter five of *The Coming of the Fairies,* the following year.§ It is quite clear that Hodson believed he was encountering an array of non-human intelligent entities in the beck, and that *both* girls were also seeing them. The chapter is a simple explanation of where they saw the faeries and the different types of entities that seemed to inhabit the beck. It needs to be read in full for

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* Cooper, *Case of the Cottingley Fairies*, 84-85.

† Toshio Akai, 'The Cottingley Fairies Photographs and Spirit Photography', *Proceedings of the Faculty of Humanities and Sciences, Kobe Gakuin University 19* (1999). Available at https://www.academia.edu/9089443/The_Cottingley_Fairies_Photographs_and_Spirit_Photography (Accessed February 2024). 48.

‡ Bill Keidan (2013), 'An Esoteric Resource on the Life and Work of Geoffrey Hodson' http://www.geoffreyhodson.com/Appendices.html (Accessed February 2024).

§ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Coming of the Fairies* (New York: Doran, 1922), 108-22.

a true understanding of how *full-on* Hodson was, but an example from 12 August gives an impression of the whole:

> Two tiny wood elves came racing over the ground past us as we sat on a fallen tree trunk. Seeing us, they pulled up short about five feet away, and stood regarding us with considerable amusement but no fear. They appeared as if completely covered in a tight fitting one-piece skin, which shone slightly as if wet. They had hands and feet large and out of proportion to their bodies… There were a large number of these figures racing about the ground. Their noses appeared almost pointed and their mouths wide. No teeth and no structure inside the mouth… It was as if the whole were made up of a piece of jelly. Surrounding them, as an etheric double surrounds a physical form, is a greenish light, something like chemical vapour.*

The entities then sank below the ground. This particular incident seems to have been witnessed by only Hodson and Frances, but many of the other sightings involve both girls, and it is clear that the three of them spent a lot of time together in the beck attempting to discern the faerie-type entities that would manifest there. Hodson

* Doyle, *Coming of the Fairies*, 110-11.

wrote further about his expedition to Cottingley in two books, *The Kingdom of the Gods* and *The Fairies at Work and Play*, and his thoughts were again recorded in an interview just before he died; he was always consistent about what he saw with the girls at Cottingley.* But Elsie and Frances were not complimentary about Hodson, when interviewed many years later in 1976. Frances went as far as to call him 'a phoney.' However, in the same interview they also suggested they all *did* see faeries during Hodson's stay.† In fact, in both girls' dispositions on Hodson and his visit, on the rare occasions they mentioned it, seem rather nervy. They did not seem to know what to make of him, and it may be that his Theosophical outlook was a philosophical mindset that was simply beyond them. Frances saw faeries, Elsie may have seen them, but the quest for an ontological reality of the entities never seemed to have entered their minds, whereas for Hodson (as well as Gardner and Conan Doyle) this was the primary interest. Elsie even suggested (in a 1983 conversation with Marjorie Johnson, honorary secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society, and author of *Seeing Fairies*) that they had only spent three days with Hodson in the beck, whereas it is

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* Geoffrey Hodson, *The Kingdom of the Gods* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1999, 1st pub. 1952), 123-24; Geoffrey Hodson, *The Fairies at Work and Play* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1976, 1st pub. 1925), 74-75; Cooper, *Case of the Cottingley Fairies*, 92-94.

† Cooper, *Case of the Cottingley Fairies*, 87.

quite evident from Hodson's report, and Gardner's notes, that he was with the girls for two weeks, and spent almost every day with them in the beck.*

Hodson appears to have been a man with genuine psychic abilities – he was what Bill Keidan (Hodson's online biographer) terms an 'illumined occultist.' He spent the rest of his long life producing a prodigious amount of books and articles on a wide-range of esoteric subjects from reincarnation to the Angelic Kingdom, which were well thought of in Theosophical and esoteric circles. He also collaborated with scientists on a spectrum of surprising subject matter from sub-atomic physics to anthropology, gaining genuine respect for his (non-scientific) insights into quantum mechanics and the potential consciousnesses of early hominids.† Hodson does not seem to have been a fraud. He would appear to have been a genuine clairvoyant, who simply reported what he perceived. But what does clairvoyance mean, and were Frances' and Hodson's clairvoyant experiences with faeries at Cottingley Beck the same thing?

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* Marjorie Johnson was very indignant at the girls for misrepresenting Hodson in this respect and their general assassination of his character in later life. Her view on the Cottingley story is an interesting addition to the mythology — Marjorie T Johnson, *Seeing Fairies* (San Antonia: Anomalist Books, 2014), 279-85.

† Keidan, 'Geoffrey Hodson' http://www.geoffreyhodson.com/Clairvoyant-Investigations-2.html (Accessed February 2024).

Clairvoyance and Faerie-Type Entities

In his later writings, Hodson would often describe clairvoyance as 'thought forms', which manifested during certain states of consciousness that were either inherent to an individual or which could be learnt. These forms could often take the aspect of non-human intelligent entities, such as faeries. This does not mean they are figments of imagination, but rather that they are, at some level, real and able to be seen and encountered whilst a person is in the appropriate state of consciousness. Hodson's extensive writings describe the different types of faerie-type entities he experienced throughout his life. His prose-style can seem a little opaque at times, but his sincerity and dedication to investigating what he would often term the *occult realms* are indisputable. In one of his most wide-ranging books, *The Kingdom of the Gods* (first published in 1952), he succinctly – albeit in his usual, gnomic (pun intended) language – describes the clairvoyance, or seership, that allowed him to interact with non-material intelligent entities:

> As part of the unfoldment of the human intellect into omniscience, the development occurs at certain stages of human evolution of the faculty of fully-conscious, positive clairvoyance. This implies an extension, which can be hastened by means of

> self-training, of the normal range of visual response to include both visual rays beyond the violet and, beyond them again, the light of the superphysical worlds…It is important to differentiate between the passive psychism of the medium, and even the extra sensory perception of parapsychology, and the positive clairvoyance of the student of Occultism. This latter, completely under the control of the will and used in full waking consciousness, is the instrument of research with which during the past thirty years I have endeavoured to enter and explore the Kingdom of the Gods.*

Hodson's language for describing clairvoyance correlated closely with another Theosophist (albeit dissident to the established structure of the organisation), and contemporary to the Cottingley story, Rudolf Steiner, who most often described faerie-type entities as *nature spirits* or *elementals*, basing his taxonomy of them on the sixteenth-century alchemist Paracelsus.† Steiner describes

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* Hodson, *Kingdom of the Gods*, 10-11.

† Neil Rushton (2019), 'Paracelsus, Nature Spirits and Faeries' https://deadbutdreaming.wordpress.com/2019/11/17/paracelsus-nature-spirits-and-faeries/ (Accessed January 2024). Steiner was always content to classify nature spirits and elementals as within the same taxonomy of incorporeal entities, but some other Theosophists, such as Charles Leadbetter, made a distinction that further codifies them between material and non-material beings… 'Elementals are 'the thought-forms of the Great Beings or angels who are in charge of the evolution of the vegetable

how a clairvoyant can enter the world of the elementals — in normal consciousness thoughts:

> … allow themselves to be connected and separated, to be formed and then dismissed. This life of thought must develop in the elemental world a step further. There, a person is not in a position to deal with thoughts that are passive. If someone really succeeds in entering the world with his clairvoyant soul, it seems as though his thoughts were not things over which he has any command; they are living beings… You thrust your consciousness into a place, it seems, where you do not find thoughts that are like those in the physical world, but where they are living beings.*

This became a mainstay in Theosophical ideology – clairvoyance is, in part, simply a methodology for interacting with elementals, nature spirits, faeries (or whatever desired terminology is used to describe these beings), and it allows a person to see entities that are not normally available to everyday consciousness. Hodson's testimony from his time at Cottingley is certainly an example of

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kingdom'. Nature spirits are 'real living creatures, but in a different line of evolution from humans.' see Kaori Inuma, forthcoming in *The Cottingley Fairy Photographs: New Approaches to Fairies, Fakes and Folklore*

* Rudolf Steiner, 'Perception of the Elemental World (1913)', in *Nature Spirits* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1995), 177-78.

someone who was using his apparent clairvoyant abilities to interact with, or at least view, incarnate entities.*

A few years earlier W. Y. Evans-Wentz, in his 1913 publication *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, was recording similar testimonies from people in the Celtic nations, who were not aligned with the Theosophical movement, but seem the have had much the same mindset when it came to the faeries.† These people were usually called seers (as Hodson himself often described clairvoyants). Evans-Wentz met one such (anonymous in the text, but evidently George William Russell, aka 'AE') Irish seer in Rosses Point, County Sligo. He talked about various types of faeries that inhabited the landscape of Sligo, making them sound like a cross between nature spirits and mystical visions. But Evans-Wentz was just as interested in the mechanics of interacting with the faeries as he was with the stories themselves. How did the seer interface with them?

> I have always made a distinction between pictures seen in the memory of nature and visions of ac-

* An illuminating update to the Theosophical concept of clairvoyance and communication with non-material entities can be found in: Marko Pogačnik, *Nature Spirits and Elemental Beings: Working with the Intelligence in Nature* (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 1996).

† W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2004, 1st published 1911).

> tual beings now existing in the inner world. We can make the same distinction in our world: I may close my eyes and see you as a vivid picture in memory, or I may look at you with my physical eyes and see your actual image. In seeing these beings of which speak, the physical eyes may be open or closed: mystical beings in their own world and nature are never seen with the physical eyes… I usually find it possible to throw myself into the mood of seeing; but sometimes visions have forced themselves upon me.*

Over two centuries earlier, Robert Kirk was describing much the same form of seership amongst certain inhabitants in and around Aberfoyle in Scotland, usually described as the second sight.† The Theosophists of the early twentieth century appear to have been unaware of Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth*, but the basic mechanics of seeing and encountering faerie-type entities through clairvoyant attributes were much the same. Were the Cottingley girls clairvoyant, in the way described by Kirk, Steiner, Russell and Hodson? It would be easier to think of Frances as a clairvoyant than Elsie, but even then this might be stretching the credentials of a young girl who

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* Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith*, 87-88.

† Neil Rushton (2016) 'The Secret Commonwealth' https://dead-butdreaming.wordpress.com/2016/07/31/the-secret-commonwealth/ (Accessed January 2024).

simply saw faeries that should not have been part of the material world. Frances certainly never described herself as having any special psychic abilities, and her later scepticism of Hodson may have been, in part, to distance herself from the rubrics of Theosophy and the Fortean qualities of clairvoyance. But there are a few clues that might suggest Frances was able to enter an altered state of consciousness, which enabled her to engage with supernatural entities. Her describing being in a *day dream* state when she first saw the faerie man in the beck indicates a meditative state, and in the *addenda* to her memoirs, her daughter Christine states: 'Strangely, she told me later that she didn't see them straight on, but obliquely.'* Christine also suggests that Frances may have had certain telepathic abilities from a young age, when: 'she had got into the habit of closing her mind to stop others from hearing what she was thinking.'† The insinuation is that Frances may have been more of a clairvoyant in the mould of Hodson than she realised. Or perhaps she was just another person who occasionally slipped into an altered state of consciousness and saw faeries.

The connection between encountering faerie-type entities and being in an altered, or non-ordinary state of consciousness is well attested in both historic and mod-

* Griffiths, *Reflections*, 89.

† Ibid. 114.

ern accounts. The folklore is replete with protagonists being agitated, depressed, blissful, confused, anxious, meditative, ecstatic or ill before they become embroiled in a faerie encounter.* And modern faerie encounters are similarly most often accompanied by descriptions of the experiencer feeling different in some way from their everyday state of consciousness, as can be seen, for example, in the two censuses carried out by Simon Young.† These altered states become greatly magnified when they have been induced through the consumption or injection of psychedelic drugs. *N,N*-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), especially, is almost guaranteed to throw the participant's consciousness in to an entirely parallel reality where there *will* be entities awaiting, frequently faerie-type entities.‡ Clairvoyance is just one special type of altered state – defined by the likes of Steiner, Russell and Hodson – but perhaps accessible to everyone, and certainly to sensitive types such as Frances (and perhaps Elsie) when environmental and psychological conditions are conducive.

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* The seventeenth-century story of Ann Jefferies is particularly instructive on this point. See, Simon Young, *Ann Jefferies and the Fairies: A Source Book for a Seventeenth-Century Cornish Fairy Witch* (Pwca Books and Pamphlets, 2023).

† Simon Young, *Fairy Census 1* and *2* (2017 and 2024): https://www.fairyist.com/survey/read-the-fairy-census-1-and-2/ (Accessed February 2024).

‡ Neil Rushton, 'Faerie-Type Entities and the DMT Experience: An Ontological Survey,' *Psychedelic Press* 40 (2023), 51-63.

In the film *Photographing Fairies*, the altered state/clairvoyant trope was enabled by the consumption of the psychotropic white flower. This allowed a cinematographic shortcut to describe how the faeries were perceived – it was a code for clairvoyance that would otherwise have been too cumbersome to detail in the limited time the film had to tell the story. In the Cottingley story (mirrored by the film) clairvoyance was central; not brought about suddenly by a magical flower, but rather the constant background radiation to the sensation and hype caused by the photographic images. While Hodson termed his experiences in Theosophical language, Frances was more straightforward, and yet they were ultimately describing the same clairvoyant encounters with non-corporeal, faerie-type entities in the beck over the course of four years. Of course, if we accept, at some level, the reality of clairvoyance in perceiving these entities, we are then obliged to ask what the entities are at an ontological level. This is a vast, and perhaps an unanswerable question, but a recent three-point descriptor in a paper by David Luke* manages to encapsulate what clairvoyant experiences with faeries might be (as long as deception is ruled out), even though he was attempting to

* David Luke, 'Discarnate Entities and Dimethyltryptamine (DMT): Psychopharmacology, Phenomenology and Ontology', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 75 (2011), 26-42. Available at: https://dmttimes.com/david-luke-papers-and-articles/2020/1/2/discarnate-entities-and-dimethyltryptamine-dmt-psychopharmacology-phenomenology-and-ontology (Accessed December 2023).

understand the nature of the entities encountered under the influence of DMT:

> 1) They are hallucinations. The entities are subjective hallucinations. Such a position is favoured by those taking a purely (materialist-reductionist) neuropsychological approach to the phenomena.
>
> 2) They are psychological/transpersonal manifestations. The communicating entities appear alien but are actually unfamiliar aspects of ourselves, be they our reptilian brain or our cells, molecules or sub-atomic particles.
>
> 3) The entities exist in otherworlds and can interact with our physical reality. A numinous experience provides access to a true alternate dimension inhabited by independently existing intelligent entities in a stand-alone reality, which exists co-laterally with ours, and may interact with our world when certain conditions are met. The identity of the entities remains speculative.

Points 2 and 3 do sound like Theosophy in updated language. They certainly might explain the experiences of Frances Griffiths and Geoffrey Hodson at Cottingley, whilst at the same time allowing for the possibility of point

1. While the (first four) photographs were a deceit perpetrated by Elsie and Frances, the apparent interactions with faerie-type entities described by Frances and Hodson seem genuine. Their clairvoyance (or altered states of consciousness) sanctioned encounters with these entities in Cottingley Beck. Perhaps if we can put to one side the exquisite deception of the photographs, we might understand that the real Cottingley story involved a young girl and a thirty-five year old man tapping into the numinous and seeing the unseeable.

Article: *Tales of the Little People*, Marie Campbell's Lost Appalachian Fairy Book

Chris Woodyard and Simon Young

Introduction and Reputation

Marie Campbell (1903[*]-1980) was an American folklorist from Illinois, who collected folklore in Kentucky (Letcher County area) in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[†] There has

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* The Library of Congress and several other sources claim that Campbell was born in 1907: Margaret R. Yocom, 'Campbell, Marie Alice (1903-1980)', *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, (ed) Jan Brunvand, (New York: Garland Publishing 2006 [1996], 230 disagrees. An SSDI card for a Marie Campbell who died February 1980 (see 'Marie Alice Campbell', 1980 for death date) at Amherst, was born Feb 17, 1903.

† Margaret R. Yocom, 'Campbell, Marie Alice (1903-1980)', *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, (ed) Jan Brunvand, (New York: Garland Publishing 2006 [1996], 230. As biographical details about Campbell are sometimes unsure we print here the important parts of 'Marie Alice Campbell', an obituary from 1980: 'Amherst - Marie Alice Campbell of 111 Sunset Ave., professor emeritus of English at the University of Massachusetts, died Friday in a local nursing home. Born in Tammus, Ill., she received a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in 1932, a master's degree from George Peabody College, Nashville, Tenn., in 1937 and her doctorate from Indiana University in 1956. She taught school in the Appalachian Mountains for several years... She lectured on New England history and folklore

been little work on Campbell's folklore writing, though it is fair to say that she was 'primarily concerned with archaic material' in the Appalachians.* Yocom states that Campbell 'often did not publish verbatim versions of the traditional material she collected; her strength lies in her early recognition of the importance of presenting a folktale's context'.† There were some folklore articles in 1938 and 1939.‡ In 1942 she brought out an autobiographical novel *Cloud Walking* about her time in Kentucky (New York: Rinehart Inc.); in 1946 a book on midwifery in Kentucky, *Folks Do Get Born (*New York: Rinehart); a novel in 1950 entitled *A House with Stairs* about the Civil War and its aftermath in the south (New York: Rinehart). There is also a short 1953 article on 'Folk remedies from south Georgia'.§ Her doctorate followed on in the mid 1950s and her only conventional folklore book was published in 1958: *Tales*

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and participated in several television programs. She taught at the University of Oslo, Norway, and was a Guggenheim fellow and a University of Kentucky Press Fellow. Before coming to UMass in 1963, she taught at several colleges and universities, including Indiana University and Glassboro (N.J.) State College. She was a member of PEN, a society of writers. She leaves several brothers and sisters... Donations may be made to the Friends of Jones Library, Amherst.'

* W.K. McNeil, 'Appalachian Folklore Scholarship', *Appalachian Journal* 5 (1977), 55-64 at 57.

† Yocom, 'Campbell', 230.

‡ E.g. 'Survivals of Old Folk Drama in the Kentucky Mountains', *Journal of American Folklore* 51 (1938), 10-24.

§ *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 19 (1953), 1-3.

from the Cloud Walking Country.* After her doctorate she spent many years teaching at the University of Massachusetts.

There have been certain ill-defined doubts about Campbell's writings. Carl Lindahl referred, in 1988, to Campbell's 'suspect' collection of tales,† though he later toned 'suspect' down to 'unrepresentative'.‡ Lindahl gave more details in 2001:

> Here I omit Marie Campbell's substantial collection from the Appalachians of Kentucky… because experts, believing that the tales were based very closely on book tales rather on oral performances, have expressed significant doubts concerning the collection's faithfulness as a record of a living Märchen community. As Herbert Halpert puts it, 'One of the American folktale collections regarded with great doubt by many scholars is Marie Campbell's *Tales from the Cloud Walking Country,* because most of its tales are very close to the Grimm's *Household Tales*

* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

† 'Who is Jack? A Study in Isolation', *Fabula* 29 (1988), 373-382 at 377.

‡ 'Introduction', *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and Their Tellers*, (ed) William Bernard McCarthy *et alii* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1994), i-xxxiv at xxvi. Lindahl reports that there were concerns about Marie Campbell's reliability in the wider American folklore community,

> (personal correspondence February 25, 1991). Halpert goes on to suggest, that Campbell may not have simply rewritten the Grimms, as some have suggested, but rather tapped a print-derived oral tradition. Campbell's collections should be thoughtfully re-examined, but until such a reassessment is complete, I find it best to exclude it from this survey.*

It is difficult to know what to make of these comments – we are still waiting, needless to say, for a 'reassessment'.† However, we would acknowledge that, for instance, Campbell was somewhat optimistic about the oral origins of the funeral songs she collected: most of which had been previously published.‡ Of course, she was, as a song-collector, not alone in this respect.§

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* Carl Lindahl, 'Sounding a Shy Tradition: Oral and Written Styles of American Mountain Märchen', *Journal of Folklore Research* 38 (2001), 68-98 at 93.

† The authors would be grateful for any Appalachian help on this question.

‡ 'Funeral Ballads of the Kentucky Mountains,' *Southern Folk-lore Quarterly* 3 (1939), 107-115.

§ Steven Roud, 'Introduction', *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America* (ed) David Atkinson and Steve Roud (London: Routledge 2016), 1-17 at 7-8 from Britain but with clear application from the US: 'Modern scholars estimate that as much as 90 per cent of the 'traditional' repertoire appeared on nineteenth-century broadsides and in other cheap printed material.'

Post Doctorate

Her doctorate from Indiana was approved in 1956, when she was about 53. It was entitled *Olden tales from across the ocean waters: A collection of seventy-eight European folktales recorded from the oral tradition of six Eastern Kentucky narrators*. Campbell wrote in the introduction to this volume that she had enough material for five volumes on folklore ('nearly fifteen hundred pages of folk tales which been organized with Dr. [Stith] Thompson's help and advice')* of which the doctorate was only the first. Campbell specifies that one of these volumes would relate to supernatural stories:

> There is one volume of local legends, tales of ghosts and of haunted houses, and 'all manner of scarey things'. Uncle Blessing tells of 'My Favoritest Ghost Spirit' that comes down through the high weeds to the side of the road and talks to him when he goes by the old Dixon graveyard. Uncle Tom and Aunt Liz Witt tell of all sorts of 'queer things on Defeated' to explain why no one lives along a certain lengthy stretch of the creek.†

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† 9-10

Another volume would be devoted to:

> stories of the Little People (Irish fairies, usually). Some are benevolent, such as the little man who helps a boy learn to play the bagpipes. Others are malevolent, and steal babies, substituting changelings, play fairy music to entice people into fairy knolls where they keep them for years, or play other mean tricks on mankind.*

Unfortunately, only one volume of the five was brought out. In 1958 Campbell published *Tales from the Cloud Walking Country* which reproduced many of the tales from her doctorate.† This would be her last book.‡ Here, too, she reiterated in the introduction that *Tales* would be the first of five volumes of folklore: the others would include a second volume of *Märchen,* 'Classical Greek and Latin Myths preserved in oral tradition through several illiterate generations,'§ and the two volumes of supernatural tales described above.

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* 10.

† Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

‡ Richard Dorson, LMC 2423 Dorson mss., 1925-1981: 'Campbell, Marie Alice (Umbach), at Indiana, wrote in a letter of that year 'I hear you have two exciting books hot on the presses' (10 Feb 1958). We have found no trace of a second book.

§ 14-15.

Ten years later, 1968, Campbell put together a summary of a *six* volume set on Appalachian lore (which survives in the archives at Indiana University).* The number had increased because she retrospectively included *Cloudwalking*, as the first volume. There was, then, vol 3, on classical myth in the Appalachians; vol 4 'Tales of the Little People'; vol 5 'Tales of the Supernatural'; and vol 6 'Another volumes of European tales of Appalachian legends that do not fit into any of the preceding volumes'. We include here the section relating to volume four.

Tales of the Little People

This is only a brief sampling of the tales of the Little People in this collection from Appalachian oral tradition. Some are told as stories only, others are local events. As some titles suggest, some of the Little People are helpful to human beings; others are malevolent.

1. The Fairy Arrow (Tom Field's story of how his horse was shot with a fairy arrow as he rode up the creek with the mail bags at dusk. He had the arrow to prove it – probably an Indian bird point)[.]

* 'Folktales Collected from Oral Tradition in Appalachian Kentucky', Indiana University archives, LMC 2421 Thompson, S. MSS, 'Campbell, Marie Alice, 1952-1968'.

2. The Little People That Learned a Boy to Be a Good Musicianer (Lessons on the bag pipes)[.]

3. The Girl That Went Inside a Fairy Knoll (a girl cow-hunting over the hills accidentally enters a fairy knoll, where she is forced day after day to bake vast amounts of corn bread. Escapes by strategy.)

4. A Baby That Was Stold by the Little People (Taking a human baby, leaving a little monster in its place)[.]

5. The Fairy Child (The Christening of a Changeling)[.]

6. The Fairy Nurse (Fairies kidnap mother of new born baby to nurse one of their offspring)[.]

7. They Were Gold Money in That Little Black Cook Pot (one of several pot-of-gold stories)[.]

8. He Knowed Better Than to Meddle with the Little People's Business (Obstructing a path known to be much used by the Little People. Local legend.)

9. I Reckon the Little People Musta Learned Her to Spin and Weave Clothes. (Local legend)[.]

> 10. Don't You Dast Misdoubt What's at the End of Every Rainbow Effen You Can Get to Where It's At (How the teller got the pot of gold at the rainbow's end and then lost it)[.]

Campbell also included a shorter summary suggesting that the book was about to be typed up. There is a fascinating reference, too, to work in the archives in Dublin.

> 'Tales of the 'little people' – fairies, leprechauns, etc. A summer's research with Irish Folklore Commission seems to establish their kinship to the Irish fairy tradition. Ready for final typing.

In the same year, 1968, Stith Thompson praised Campbell as 'one of the most interesting students' he had had. 'She is doing very well and has several works ready for publication'.*

The Briggs Connection

We only know more of *Tales of the Little People* because some details are caught in published and unpublished writings connected with British folklorist Katharine Briggs. Briggs had written a review of *Cloud Walking Country* in 1959 for

* Hari S. Upadhyaya and Stith Thompson, 'Reminiscences of an Octogenarian Folklorist', *Asian Folklore Studies* 27 (1968), 107-145 at 124.

Folklore.* Campbell and Briggs had then met in person, apparently for the first time, at the folklore archives in Dublin in 1964.† Afterwards they became friends: Campbell invited Briggs to stay at her Amherst home with Campbell, her partner Audrey and her dog Bruce.‡ A letter of 20 Mar 1972 from Campbell to Richard Dorson describes a coming two-week visit of Briggs to Campbell's home. 'Katharine', Campbell writes there, 'has visited me three times, once for ten days.'§

Briggs was evidently interested in Campbell's *Little People* and there are several references in Campbell's fond letters to Briggs on this theme. In January 1971 Campbell wrote: 'The manuscript has [not] been lost on its way to you, for the simple reason that I have not sent it.... it has been impossible to get done with *Little People* book that you are to see. Two editors have been pushing me for last things on two other books, ahead of their own projected schedules. As soon as I can manage it, I'll get the book off to you, but I rather think it will not be before late spring.'¶ She confirms in the letter that *Little People* and the 'myth

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* *Folklore* 70 (1959), 495.

† Letter from Campbell to Briggs, 14 Dec 1967: FLS collection, UCL0091785, Box 253 T274. Campbell writes, note, almost as a stranger. There evidently was not a strong connection made at Dublin.

‡ *Ibid*.

§ Richard Dorson, LMC 2423 Dorson mss., 1925-1981.

¶ 11 January, FLS collection, UCL0091786, Box 254 T275.

book' were to be published by Indiana University Press; and 'the big book' by Kentucky.

As so often with writers, the horizon recedes and recedes. 25 February (no year given, apparently 1972), Campbell writes to Briggs: 'I don't know whether I'll have the Little People ready when you come. I'll try. I had to do some extra work – notes etc – on the myth book which I had thought I was done with.'*

Something perhaps goes wrong with these plans in 1972 because in the course of that year we learn that Campbell was writing to Peacock Books about *To Watch the Sun Ball Rise* (or was this perhaps 'Another volumes of European tales of Appalachian legends that do not fit into any of the preceding volumes').† Neither *Little People* or the 'myth book', in any case, emerged from Indiana. Eleventh September 1973 Campbell sends some fairy legends to Briggs: though for some reason the letter and the legends were sent under separate cover and the legends seem not to be in the Briggs archive. This is presumably when Briggs gets her hands on a part of *Little People* for the first time.‡

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* FLS collection, UCL0091786, Box 254 T275.

† 13 August 1972, FLS collection, UCL0091786, Box 254 T275.

‡ 11 September 1973: FLS collection, UCL0091789, Box 257 T278.

In 1976, four years before Campbell's death, Katharine Briggs referred to Campbell's work in *A Dictionary of Fairies* under the heading 'American Fairies'. Here Briggs writes that:

> Sometimes the fairy beliefs were imported, and sometimes the stories. In the 1930s, Dr Marie Campbell made a remarkable collection of fairy legends of both kinds in the Appalachian Mountains. She is currently preparing these for publication.*

Katharine Briggs also summarized two of the episodes. In what follows we have omitted most of Briggs' glosses and comments and focused on Campbell's content.

> Those [tales] to which I refer here have been collected from two narrators: Tom Fields, a postman and a miller, and Granny Caudill, a bedridden old lady with a very lively mind.† The tales of both nar-

* London: Routledge, 2003 [1976], 7.

† The Caudills were an important family in the area. They are found under the *vox* Carcassonne (where Campbell taught) in the index cards of 'Letcher County - Place Names', in the Robert M. Rennick Manuscript Collection at Morehead state, 94. https://scholarworks.moreheadstate.edu/rennick_ms_collection/94/ [accessed 5 Jul 2018]. Note that Marie Campbell is credited with suggesting the name 'Carcassonne' because the area looked, with the rocks and stones around, like the walled French city.

rators are clearly derived from a Highland strain. The first relates to the belief in ELF-SHOT. The fairy bolt in this story was not a prehistoric arrowhead, but a tiny flint bird-point of the kind used by Indians for shooting birds and small game. Riding home in the dusk, Tom Fields had seen a small red-headed fairy no bigger than a tiny child, and a number of them dancing and whirling at a distance. She had run away to join them, something had whizzed past him and his horse had gone lame. He led it home and next day he came back to the place and searched until he found the arrowhead, and ever since he had been free of fairy enchantment, though he sometime heard them singing. This was his story and it exactly corresponds to the Scottish beliefs about elf-shot and the efficacy of a fairy arrow against it.

The next story was also Tom Field's. The CHANGELING tale has a wide distribution both in time and place, but the particular form it took here is commonest in Scotland. In these stories the travelling tailor is the hero, which lead you to suspect that he was also the story-teller, for in common tradition a tailor it not a heroic character. This version of the story is not told as from far off, but is supposed to have been a local happening and was overheard by Tom Fields as a small boy. Here the tailor has become

> a sewing woman who went from house to house, not the tailor, and the transition was therefore natural…
>
> Granny Caudill recognized that her stories had travelled. Her first is a recollection of the legend about the famous Scottish pipers, the MacCrimmons, who were supposed to owe their special skill to a fairy gift. It is a kind of Cinderella story in which the despised young son, left at home to do the chores, is visited by a fairy man who gives him a magic chanter and teaches him how to use it. The name of MacCrimmon has gone, but the essentials of the story remain the same… Another tale told by Granny Caudill is one of the stories of CAPTIVES IN FAIRYLAND. It is about the girl who was called into a fairy hill by the music and danced there all night. In the morning she wanted to leave, but was told she could not go till she had baked up the meal in the bin. There seemed very little there, but she could not come to the end of it until an old woman who had been captive in the hill for many years told her the secret of bringing the supply to an end.*

That we should have fairy tales told in the New World but set in the Old World, as seems to be the case with

* 7-8.

Granny Caudill's, is interesting but hardly unprecedented. Similar instances can be found, for example, in Nova Scotia.* However, Tom Fields' experience is, rather, more unusual in that a folklorist has collected evidence of fairies '[a]live and active up to a recent date in the Kentucky mountains'.†

We know a little more about Tom Fields and Granny Caudill from Campbell's 1973 letter.

> Tom Fields carried the mail on horseback three days a week and ran his grist mill three days. When we had mail six days a week Tom chose to keep his three-day schedule so another man who needed cash income could have the three other days.
>
> Granny Caudill was bedfast, but mentally alert and eager to tell her tales to the Little Teacher [i.e. Campbell]. Her family loved her and took grand care of her. She and her bed were always immaculately clean but they were busy and had not much time to spend with her. In the evenings, knowing how much she loved music, they would often play and sing for

* Mary L. N.D. Fraser, *Folklore of Nova Scotia* (N.P., Mary L. N.D [1932]), 71.

† Reidar Christiansen, 'Review: Tales from the Cloud Walking Country', *Béaloideas* 27 (1959), 120-122 at 120.

her – and to 'pleasure themselves'. She had always loved dancing and it must have been very hard to spend her last years unable to even walk. She did not complain, but many of her stories mention dancing.

Tom Fields evidently believed in the reality of fairies and Granny Caudill too. They both told of personal experience of seeing 'little people'.*

In 31 October 1979, in a letter to S. R. Hicks, Katharine Briggs writes 'Unfortunately Marie Campbell is now in hospital'. Briggs goes on to say that 'her publishers took exception to my quoting [a fairy episode] as they want to keep it to themselves until publication'.† Was this really Campbell's publisher or Campbell herself reacting to the publication of *A Dictionary of Fairies*? Did their relationship even suffer? I suspect not because Briggs was up to date with Campbell's health to the very end. The last mention in the correspondence comes 11 February 1980 when Briggs tells a correspondent that Campbell 'is now very ill'.‡ Both Briggs and Campbell were to die in that year.

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* 11 Sep 1973: FLS collection, UCL0091789, Box 257 T278.

† FLS collection, UCL0091790, Box 258 T279.

‡ Miss B. McDermitt , FLS Collection, UCL0091790, Box 258 T279.

Conclusion

What happened to Campbell's *Tales*? We have been unable to track down these pages in US archives.* But there is a reasonable chance that they do, in fact, survive somewhere. In both 1956 and 1958 Marie Campbell talked of a five-volume collection, including one volume on fairylore; in 1968 there was to be a six-volume collection and *Tales* was ready to be typed up; and in 1976 Briggs talked of fairy stories 'currently' being prepared for publication and summarized a number. Presumably Briggs' news was recent and this suggests a sureness of purpose on the part of Campbell over some twenty years. It goes without saying that if this collection could be recovered and assessed it would be of great interest for our understanding of fairylore in the New World.†

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* University of Kentucky, 1997ms359, the 'Marie Campbell papers'. This includes correspondence, two newspaper articles and the manuscripts of Campbell's published books. The dates are 1939-1962. We also checked other libraries with regional or personal connections without success. Appalachian State University, Belk Library, Special Collections, Archives and Rare Books (personal communication 30 May 2017); Eastern Tennessee University, The Archives of Appalachia (personal communication, 30 May 2017); Southern Illinois University, Morris Library, Special Collections Research Center (personal communication, 30 May 2017); The Jones Library, Amherst, Massachusetts (personal communication, 26 May 2017); Indiana University Press also has no correspondence in their files, (personal communication 1 Nov 2017). We have not, note, examined these archives personally.

† For writing on European fairylore in America: Owen Davies,

Marie Campbell. Taken from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation: https://www.gf.org/fellows/marie-campbell/ This is the only known photograph of MC. For other photographs or new information on Campbell's career please contact the authors: simonyoungfl AT gmail DOT com

America Bewitched: The story of witchcraft and Salem (London: OUP), 37-42; Wayland Hand, 'European Fairy Lore in the New World', *Folklore* 92 (1981), 141-148; Chris Woodyard and Simon Young, 'Three Notes and a Handlist of North American Fairies', *Supernatural Studies* 6 (2019), 56-85.

Article: The Banshee and Herminie Templeton Kavanagh

Carina McNally

The Banshee, or Bean Sídhe (her legend recently imbued by the popular film *The Banshees of Inisherin*) is that female spirit of Irish folklore who heralds death by screaming, wailing, or shrieking. The Irish word 'caoine' or, to use the anglified word 'keening', is seen as an evil forebearer of bad news. But, have you ever thought of the Banshee as a strong feminist, a career-minded and sympathetic character who is simply affirming herself in the world, protecting what is hers, especially around Halloween night? As this story unfolds, you'll learn not to dare touch her sacred comb!

It is this wonderful message that is imparted by the stories of Herminie Templeton Kavanagh which began with the publication of 'Darby O'Gill and the Good People' in December 1901. Her stories of Darby O'Gill and the fantastical world he inhabits are a triumph of female fortitude and ingenious creativity, as they overcome chaos

in the midst of adversity and a terror of the otherworld, fairies and ghouls. Depicting a nineteenth-century Ireland steeped in the supernatural, it's a place where both humans and fairies collide, both refusing to be defeated in the quest for freedom to govern their own lives.

Irish woman Herminie Templeton Kavanagh was living in Chicago, estranged from her husband and grieving the loss of her only child. Struggling to support herself financially by working as a stenographer, she began tapping into the Irish fairy stories of her childhood and writing for children in the rapidly expanding Irish-American communities all across the US. Her thrilling, hilarious, and often poignant series of adventure stories are set around the famously haunted Slievenamon (which translates as Mountain of the Women) in Tipperary and feature both the scariest and nicest fairies of Irish folk tradition.

But there was more to Herminie's work –as well as unleashing the magic and mayhem of fairies, the underworld, and of course the Banshee, to the delight of young readers, Kavanagh's stories also explore women's constrained lives in the male-dominated society of the early twentieth century. The stories are not just about scary fairies – they also celebrate the loyalty, kindness, determination, and fierce intelligence of their female characters.

Chief amongst them are Darby's wife Bridget, her sister Maureen, and of course the Banshee herself, who is a nicer and more impressive character than usually portrayed. Rather than being punished for engaging in matters outside of their homes, these women are applauded for stepping out into the world and positioning themselves as equal to men. Not perhaps as radical a message in many parts of the world today as it was when the stories were first written and published in 1901, but nonetheless, women's rights are still deeply resonant.

The Walt Disney film *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (starring Sean Connery) is very loosely based on Herminie's book, however, the representation of the film's female characters and their relationships with its male characters is extremely disappointing when one reads the original brilliantly subversive, proto-feminist stories.

In the 1959 film, a woman's value is based solely upon her attractiveness. 'Pretty Irish girl' Katie O'Gill cheerfully performs domestic chores leaving the exciting adventures to the men. The only female character with real power is the Banshee, the undoubted villain of the piece! There is nothing remotely feminist about *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*, which is not shocking or unexpected for a mainstream American children's film of the mid-twentieth century.

Luckily, Herminie's original message is again imparted in a new collection of Kavanagh's tales, *Darby O'Gill and the Good People*. Published by Mercier Press, Brian McManus has made some changes to the original six stories for presentation to modern readers but remains absolutely true to the spirit and intention of Herminie Templeton Kavanagh.

These delightful tales are genuine Irish storytelling, full of charm, wittiness, and poignancy, and will appeal to children and adults of all ages.

So, let's return to our beloved yet feared Banshee. In this extract from one of Herminie's original stories 'The Banshee's Comb', King Brian Connors of the Good People brings Darby O'Gill to visit her in order to settle a dispute that has arisen between them; they've had a misunderstanding involving the Banshee's sacred comb on Halloween night:

> 'Where is it you've brought me, King Brian?'
>
> 'To a place where no living man has ever ventured before. You're a great man for firsts so you are, Darby! Now mind your manners if you please and don't go stealing any other possessions from my darling death-messenger for this is where she dwells and

you're to show her some respect or I'll regret bringing you at all.'

'There's never a dull moment with you around is there, Darby?' continued the King. 'I thought that it would be some rich philosopher or the most renowned of the fairy folk who would finally outwit the banshee, who's the cleverest of us all as far as I can tell, but it turns out to be none other than Darby O'Gill of Ballinderg in the county of Tipperary.'

'I wasn't trying to outwit her, King,' insisted Darby, 'It was all a misunderstanding.'

'I believe you, Darby,' says King Brian. 'Let's just hope that she does.'

Darby was blinking and shivering and growing more and more anxious beside the King, when suddenly, and without a sound, the banshee stood before them. She was all in white, and her yellow hair strealed to the ground. The weight and sorrow of ages were on her pale face.

'Is that you, Brian Connors?' she says.

'It is your humble and obedient servant, ma'am,' says he.

'It's a long while since I've seen you. Are you keeping well?'

'There's not a bother on me. I've been away on a diplomatic mission visiting the German fairies for, when I heard tell that they live on an island in the River Ryan, I thought to myself that there must be some Irish fairies living amongst them there, Ryan being an Irish surname, but sure when I arrived didn't it turn out that it's not spelt Ryan like the surname but Rhine like – well, like the German river. Who would have known it?'

'Well, if you'd stopped off here on your way, you omadhaun, I might have given you a clue or two to put you right and save you heading off on a wild goose chase looking for Irish-German fairies!'

'They gave me a great welcome all the same. I'll say that for the Germans. I've never eaten or drank so well.'

'If you don't very much mind,' says the banshee, 'we've important matters to attend to here. Isn't the

man you've brought to see me the man who grabbled me on Halloween night and gave me an awful fright and caused all the turmoil in his world and in mine? Have you heard that without my enchanted comb the ghosts have been running riot in the last place where I had it and that I haven't been able to keep them under control because I can't sing at all well without my comb? And don't talk to me about the people who were due to die but haven't been able to die since Halloween night without my keening to warn them. It's all been most inconvenient!'

'It was a misunderstanding,' says King Brian.

'Well, misunderstanding or no misunderstanding,' she says, "tis the fine lot of trouble he's caused me and he's taken his time to come here and make amends, and he a friend of the fairies', she says.

'He couldn't come sooner,' says the King, 'for he didn't know the way without me and I've been in Germany looking for my Irish cousins if you remember rightly.'

The banshee let out the longest and deepest sigh of frustration that Darby had ever heard.

'A woman needs reserves of patience that would fill the River Shannon three times over!' says she.

***

Editor's Note: The FIS thanks Carina McNally for permission to reprint this piece and encourages members to try: *Darby O'Gill and The Good People* by Brian McManus. (Mercier Press 2024)

Article: What's in a name? The Fairy Chapel and Fairy Bridge at Heysham Head

Jessica Holmes

Introduction

Heysham Head is one of those places where even the most stoic or cynical person is likely to nod their head in agreement if you suggest it holds some form of magic. The landscape, along with its monuments and relics, offers a complex narrative of intertwined histories, myths and religious beliefs that provides visitors with frequent visual clues relating to memories of heritage and ancestry (see Nash, Date unknown: p. 300).

Occupying a prominent position on the headland overlooking Morecambe Bay stands St Patrick's Chapel, a romantic ruin constructed in sandstone blocks which overlooks a series of mysterious and empty, rock cut graves. Although the chapel bears the name of Saint Patrick and

is often associated with a local legend derived from his writings of being shipwrecked off the local coast whilst escaping from pirates (see McCarthy, translator, 2008), the earliest phase of the chapel's construction probably dates to the sixth or seventh century, at least two-hundred-and-fifty years after the death of the Saint (Potter & Andrews, 1994).

Figure 1: St Patrick's Chapel and rock cut graves, Heysham.

The coastline directly to the west of the chapel and graves is a continuous sandstone rock cliff-face that once contained several striking features that were associated with fairy 'toponyms' or placenames, but unfortunately these were lost, possibly due to quarrying in the 1920s. 'Fairy Chapel' was a section of the cliff face that contained

a series of large niches with humanoid forms. Close by was 'Fairy Bridge', a small sea stack that also contained a 'Fairy Window'. This article will examine these coastline features through the historic postcard images that are all that now remain of them and it will also consider their influence on another monument that is still present, a graffiti rock art site.

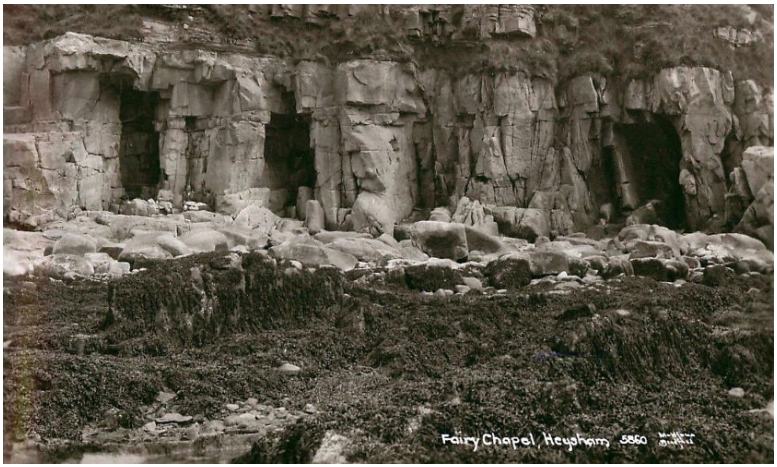

Figure 2. Fairy Chapel, Heysham.

Fairy Chapel

I have managed to source a number of local postcard images of Heysham's Fairy Chapel (see Figures 2 and 3) which, from the presence of tourists for scale shows that the niches were impressive features standing approximately five to six metres tall and one to two metres wide. There were at least three distinct niches, possibly more. A

consideration is whether the name 'Fairy Chapel' is provided as a 'traditional' name (a name used before 1840 AD created organically through supernatural associations) or a 'beautified' name (a name provided after 1840 AD by the Victorians for aesthetic or commercial reasons; Young, 2019: 42).

There are other examples of the Fairy Chapel toponym associated with Lancashire sites. Across the Bay at Humphrey Head there is a series of shallow rock caves carved quite high up the cliff face that bears the name which are associated with a holy well. There is also a fifteenth-century folklore tale relating to a 'Fairies Chapel' at Healey Dell in which a local miller rants about the unworthiness of priests and then is drawn by an enchanted hare to a fairy encounter within the 'Thrutch' (Roby, 1872: 12- 30):

> Fascinated by terror, he could not refrain from following this horrible appearance, which, as if delighted to have ensnared him, frisked away with uncouth and fiendish gambols, to the very centre of the Fairies' Chapel… Then a tiny thing came forth, clad in white, like a miniature of the human form, and, peeping about cautiously, ran back… It might be for the malicious purpose of drawing down upon him the puny but fearful vengeance of those irritable creatures the fairies; and soon he saw a whole troop

> of them issuing out of the crevice (taken from Roby, 1872: 15).

What strikes me, speaking as an artist rather than an academic, is the similarity of form between the shapes of the niches in the Heysham cliff face and those of the rock cut graves (see Figure 3). At both locations we find niches that display a 'shroud-form' with a rounded top and tapered bottom and a 'shouldered form' with a cut following the lines of the head and shoulders. If the graves are a mirror of this landscape feature it could provide a supernatural association between the sites as far back as the eleventh century when the graves were originally cut. It is possible that in the intervening centuries some niches have been lost to erosion. This would suggest that the name 'Fairy Chapel' is indeed a local traditional name, but the growth of Heysham's popularity as a Victorian tourist site and bathing resort in the mid-nineteenth century means that it could have been provided as a beautified name at this time to 'sell' the local area to visitors. The name does not appear on any historical map that I have seen to date.

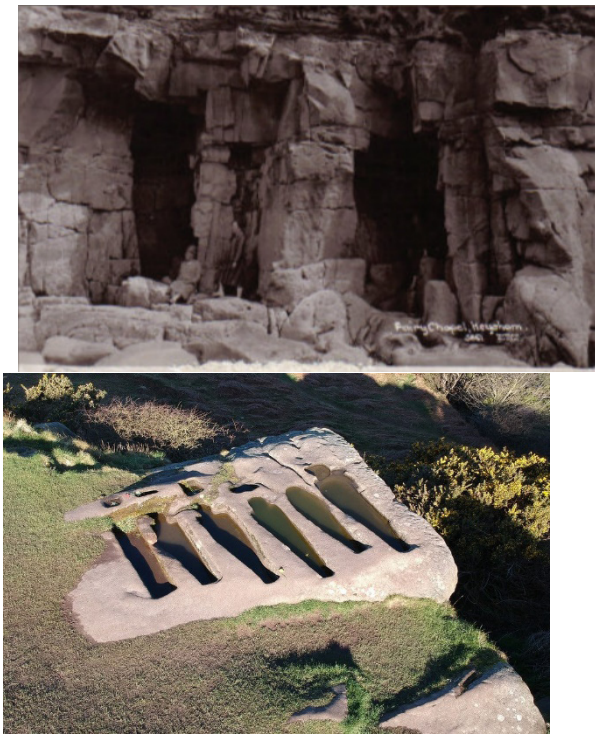

Figure 3: Comparing the shapes of the niches at Fairy Chapel with the shape of the rock cut graves associated with St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham.

Fairy Bridge

'Fairy bridge' is a name that is associated with certain manmade bridges and bridge-like natural features from Ireland, the Isle of Man, the UK, the Faroe Islands (even as far away as Iran and China). The name was likely imported via a sea voyager/pilgrim to Heysham's ecclesiastical centre. These features often have local associations with healing rituals such as rag or note hanging and could be associated with superstitious behaviours, such as always

greeting the fairies before travelling through or across the bridge, a means of practicing taboo. The Fairy Bridge at Heysham was an attractive sea stack (see Figure 4), but of course clambering around it would have had an element of danger also. There is a similar feature known as the 'Fairy Stone' across the Bay at Humphrey Head which consists of an erratic boulder perched at an angle on the cliff face, this is also associated with a Fairy Window and was probably named by local fisherman travelling around the Bay.

Figure 4: Fairy Bridge and Fairy Window (Heysham postcard 1912).

Figure5: Heysham Labyrinth (taken from Nash, 2008: 229)

Heysham Labyrinth

There is one other landscape feature at Heysham Head that is worthy of note for fairy enthusiasts and that is the presence of a prehistoric-style rock carved labyrinth with seven distinct rings. This feature was likely carved during the eighteenth or nineteenth century when this type of motif became very fashionable to have within parks and gardens. The carving has eroded quite significantly since it was discovered in 1994 which suggests that it doesn't have great age (Nash, 2008: 229). The labyrinth itself has been cut by later initials that were also carved into the rock. The labyrinth is associated with at least seventy-five other distinct pieces of graffiti rock art across an area of just ten

metres squared on the coastline very close to where the Fairy Chapel and Fairy Bridge were located. The earliest date recorded from the graffiti was 1896 and the latest is 2011 making the site both a monument and form of organic shrine (ibid: 228). It is possible that the labyrinth was created as a means of trapping fairies or evil spirits within it as part of a magical rite.

Certainly, these enigmatic landscape features have served to trap and enthral this local artist as they provide an endless source of inspiration!

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Fairy Book Reviews

Fairy Films: Wee Folk on the Big Screen (Dragon Publishing, 2023), edited by Joshua Cutchin

Fairies are ancient, movies are modern, and in *Fairy Films: Wee Folk on the Big Screen,* editor Joshua Cutchin brings together eleven writers to lay out how the two intersect. This occurs far more often than you might think, and in ways you would never expect. For instance, Patrick Dugan presents us with parallels to fairylore in cult classic *Rocky Horror Picture Show* with such ease that I felt like a fool for being totally oblivious to the overt fae tropes despite dozens of viewings.

As Dr. Simon Young says in his essay on Disney, 'Images penetrate the human mind in a much more powerful way than words', (pg. 277) and everyone holds great love in their heart for specific movies. So, naturally, I was thrilled to see chapters of *Fairy Films* dedicated to beloved films and series of mine (Mark Anthony Wyatt writes on the *Twin Peaks* universe, Dr. Jack Hunter delves into the mystic cinematic realms of Brian Froud).

However, I was equally excited to be turned on to unfamiliar media (good movies are hard to come by these days). One example is a particularly interesting piece of J-horror that Wren Collier's essay exposed me to, a hidden gem by the name of *Marebito*. Others include *The Hole in the Ground*, an Irish folk horror film lovingly dissected by Susan Demeter, and the beautifully bizarre *Borgman*, whose complex symbolism editor Joshua Cutchin unravels.

Other contributors highlight films such as Dune (James P. Nettles), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Dr. David Floyd), *Photographing Fairies* (Dr. Neil Rushton), and *The Hallow* (Allison Jornlin).

Fairy Films has given me much to watch and even more to think about, and each of the eleven essays were as enchanting to read as the films they reference. While many think the fairies dead and gone, *Fairy Films: Wee Folk on the Big Screen* makes it clear they live on, embedded in our narratives, hidden in plain view. As long as there are stories being told, fairies exist.

Anastasia Robinson

Matthias Egeler, *Elfen und Feen: Eine kleine Geschichte der Anderwelt* (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2024

In *Elfen und Feen in der Kulturgeschichte*, Matthias Egeler embarks upon an exploration of elf and fairy realms. The book is made up of thematic chapters that chart the evolution and transformation of elves and fairies through time. The journey commences in early medieval Europe, where these beings are revered as supernatural entities. It then takes the reader through the Renaissance and into the Victorian era and, indeed, beyond.

Egeler does not limit himself to 'mere' history. He probes the anthropological significance of these figures, exploring how they have been employed to navigate complex social and moral landscapes. His analysis highlights literary works, such as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, of course, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. There are references to to visual arts and contemporary media, and even the Fairy Investigation Society! The book concludes with reflections on the contemporary relevance of these mythical figures, contemplating their roles in today's environmental debates.

Elfen und Feen is often academic in tone, this scholarly work remains accessible to a broader audience – as long as you read German! – bridging the gap between rigorous

study and enjoyable reading. And all this in 182 pages of text…

Riccardo

Editor's Note: The Newsletter runs reviews in the June newsletter. Please submit!

From the Archives: the Poke People (1919-1920?)

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the *Northern Echo* '(about Dec 1919 or Jan 1920).' I am indebted to Kaori Inuma for bringing it to my attention. She photographed it in a scrapbook in the Brotherton Library's Special Collections.

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Just before my little boy was three years old he made his first acquaintaner with the Poke People. His cot is by my bed, and one night, long after I thought he was sound asleep, he suddenly said 'Mummy, the Poke People are here!'

I said: 'Are they darling? Never mind go to sleep, Mummy will send then away.'

A pause then: 'But they're still here,' and I murmur 'No: Mummy's sent them away on a puffer train.'

Another pause. 'But the green ones are here now!'

'Mommy's sent them away on a motor-car.'

'But the little one hasn't gone yet!'

'Mummy's sent him ever so far away on a big steamer. Close your eyes again, sweetheart.'

'But Mummy, they come when I close my eyes, and they poke me!'

Hence, I suppose, the name.

Another long interval, then, 'Mummy, did the Poke People take their Pokes with them when you sent them away?'

That was three months or so ago, and since then farther tricks of this tiresome tribe with their Pokes or Pokers, as he sometimes calls them, have been revealed to me in the night watches.

I have never heard them spoken of in the day-time, and they never come when the child goes to bed first, but quite late after I myself have settled down to sleep. The little voice announces their arrival. They do not actually frighten him, but rather seem to tease and annoy him with their pokes, and he is always glad when his infallible

Mummy sends them right away

I wish I knew what they look like to him, and I'd love to see them myself, but I don't suppose I ever shall. I picture them as impish brownies, with Puck-like propensities, armed with diminutive pokers, with which they delight to worry their unhappy victim, though why they should choose our house which is in the heart of a big town, for their midnight revels, nor why they should play their pranks on just my little sleepy boy. I cannot imagine.

I have asked my maids and all the small circle of the child's acquaintances if they have ever mentioned the Poke People to him, but no one had even heard of them before, so that they must be his own invention unless it is possible for an old legend or fairy tale to have filtered through from generations of West-country ancestors – Devon on his daddy's side and Cornish on mine – to the half-asleep brain or the dream of a quite ordinary and normal child of three

The Poke People might easily have their origin in old Celtic folk lore I should think. They might easily be related to the Pixies, whose playful pranks are a source of fear and wonder to the countryside on Dartmoor and in Cornwall.

My husband's father used to draw very charming little pictures of hobgoblins and such like which he had seen peeping out from behind furze bushes and playing in the heather, to amuse the children he knew, so I wonder sometimes if his little fairy friends have skipped a generation – a gymnastic feat which should be quite easy to them and have now come to visit our little boy in the guise of the Poke People.

I shall be furious if some practical person dares to suggest supper as the possible cause of these nocturnal raids of the Poke People. Believe me, reader, I give my small son the simplest and most commonsense diet, and he is not suffering from dyseptic nightmares, and so the mystery cannot be solved in that unpoetical way, but is rather a problem for students of the psychology of the child's mind about which we hear so much in these days.

Other Pwca Books

WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT SERIES

1. Edward Fairfax, *The Fewston Witches, 1621-623: A Yorkshire Coven*

FAIRIES AND FAIRYLORE SERIES

1. *The Fairy Witch of Carrick-on-Suir: A Source Book for a Nineteenth-Century Resurrectionist*

2. *Ann Jefferies and the Fairies: A Source Book for a Seventeenth-Century Cornish Fairy Witch*

3. *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Scary Fairy Tales*

4. *Fairy Census I: Part 1, Britain and Ireland*

5. *Fairy Census I: Part 2, North America*

6. *The Fairy Census I: Part 3, Europe, Australasia, and the Rest of the World with Four Fairy Census Essays*

7. T*he Wollaton Gnomes: A Nottingham Fairy Mystery*

8. *The Witches and Fairies of Nineteenth-Century Ilkley*

9. *Fairy Census 2: Part 1, Britain and Ireland*

10. *Fairy Census 2: Part 2, The United States*

11. *Fairy Census 2: Part 3, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Rest of the World*

12. *Fairy Horror: Scary Tales of the Fey in Fiction and in Fact*

13. *Fairy Horror 2: More Scary Tales of the Fey in Fiction and in Fact*

GHOSTS SERIES

1. *The Ghosts of Medieval Yorkshire: The Zombies, Shape-Changers and Ghouls of Byland Abbey*

2. *Some Bedfordshire Ghost Tales*

3. *Meeting an Immortal: Encounters with the Wandering Jew in British Folklore*

4. *Haunting Horses: Equine Ghosts, Portents and Shapechangers from Britain, Ireland and World Folklore*

5. The Ricketts' Poltergeist at Hinton Ampner: Hampshire's Most Famous Haunting

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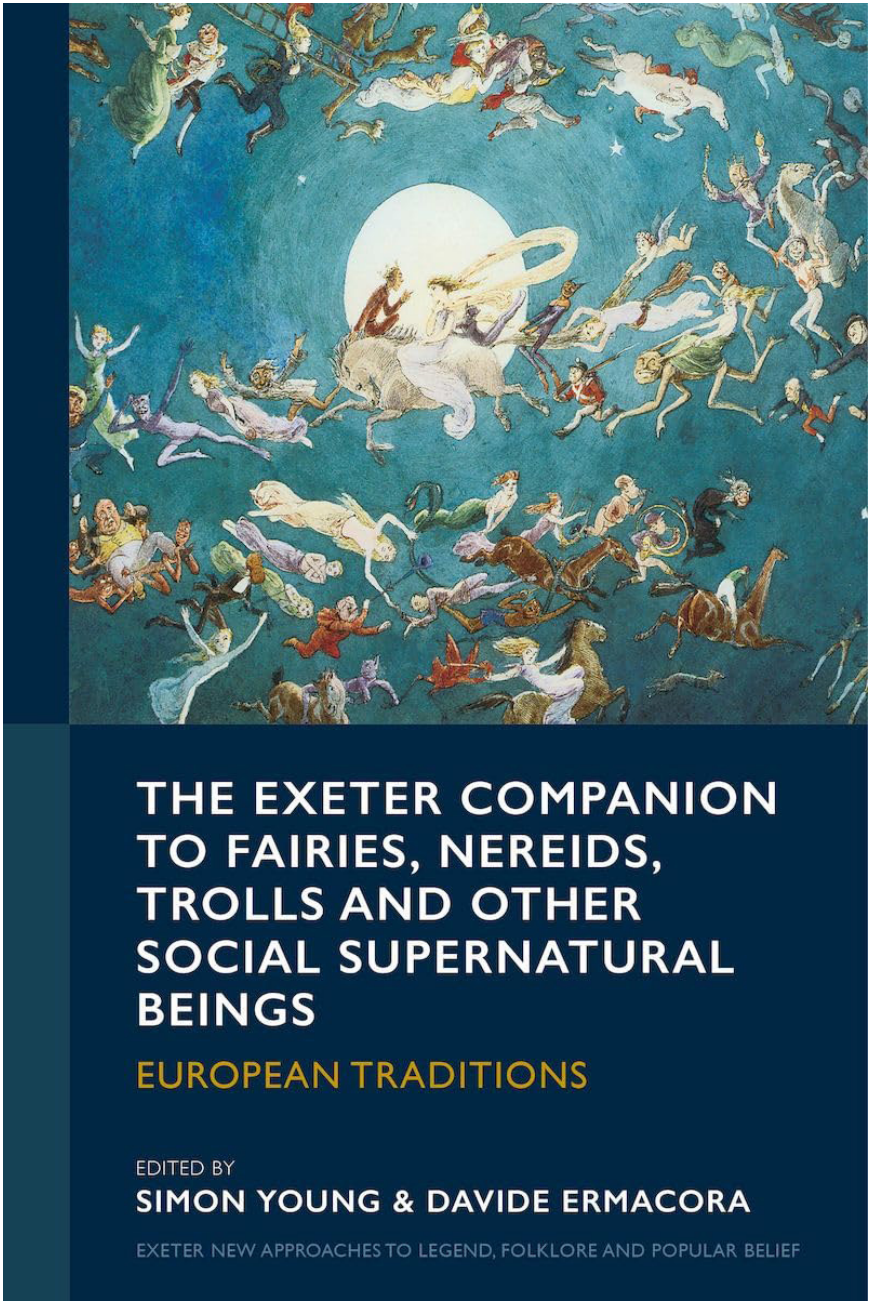
Let us always be out of doors among trees and grass, and rain and wind and sun… A something that the ancients call divine can be found and felt there still.

Richard Jefferies



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