

## **Lochlann the Leprechaun**

**By David K. McDonnell**

My name is David McDonnell. I'm a descendant of an old Irish clan that has been around for a few thousand years. They were with the Belgae Celts who fought in the continent of Europe against Julius Caesar.

They were the Erainn who migrated into Ireland, and the island became known as the land of the Erainn, or Eire Land, in English Ireland. They were part of an Erainn ethnic group known Ulaid, who migrated into the northern end of Ireland - the Vikings named this region Ulster for the Ulaid.

The clan settled on both sides of the North Channel, in Scotland and Ireland, and in the Hebrides Islands in between. The intermingled and intermarried with the Vikings who settled in the same region.

I've assembled many, many stories of this clan, and put them into my book, entitled ClanDonnell. They are true stories, which collectively tell the story or history of Ireland. I'm now on a national book and story-telling tour, telling these true stories of Ireland. I've told stories at Celtic festivals, Irish pubs, book stores, and public libraries. Please come and see me during the festival and we can talk about the book and about Celtic history, and I'd love it if you shared your Scottish or Irish story with me.

Some of these sessions on my book tour have been quite serious and historical in focus. I've found people eager to learn about the history of Ireland and the land of their ancestors.

Some of these sessions have been a bit more fanciful. I enjoy weaving a tale, and these sessions have been quite popular in Irish pubs, when I have a microphone and the audience has a pint of Guinness.

The organizers of this festival were kind enough to invite me here, and I asked, what do you want me to do? They told me to make this session entirely educational. They didn't want me to tell any fanciful stories or repeat undocumented legends or folklore. My job at this stage is to tell you true stories of Ireland.

So that is what I'm going to do. True stories only.

I'm going to tell you about leprechauns.

You all know about leprechauns. Some people think they are a lot like Bigfoot or Sasquatch.

Ever see TV show, Finding Bigfoot on Animal Planet? The show follows four researchers in their quest to find Sasquatch. All four are experts in the field.

One is named Matt Moneymaker, an appropriate name. His expertise is that he is the founder of Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization. He started the organization, so that makes him an expert. I actually admire the guy. I'm sure he was sitting in his living room one day and decided: "I'm going to find Bigfoot." But instead of just chasing Bigfoot, he formed the Bigfoot

Field Researchers Organization and landed a TV contract to finance his search. I wish I had thought of that.

Another guy in the group, per his own resume, dabbled in science in school before deciding to major in jazz guitar. Now he is a Sasquatch researcher and writer. His writings have been extensively published on his own blog. I'm not sure if he's been published anywhere else.

The third guy in the group is nicknamed Bobo. His expertise is making Sasquatch sounds – he can call them in woods. Since no one in the real world has heard a Sasquatch in the woods, no one can challenge Bobo's skills.

The fourth member of the group is a woman who actually is a biologist and a trained field researcher. The other 3 make fun of her because she is a skeptic and has never really seen nor heard a Sasquatch. So what does she know?

I think the show is a hoot, and should be on Comedy Central, or a fantasy network, instead of on Animal Planet.

But there is a difference between a Sasquatch and a leprechaun.

Actually, there are two differences. A Sasquatch has big feet, hence the name "Bigfoot", and that a leprechaun has wee little feet.

The other difference is that Sasquatch is the figment of the active imagination of people like Bobo. Leprechauns, in contrast, are real.

Leprechauns have been around in Ireland for thousands of years. And there is at least one leprechaun in New Mexico, and I'm going to tell you about him shortly.

Leprechaun comes from two old Irish words - *lú* meaning small and *orpán* meaning body. They are very mysterious creatures. They are thought to descend from Tuatha Dé or Tribe of the Gods.

Some say that they leprechaun is the offspring of an evil spirit and a degenerate fairy. This may or may not be true. If it is, then it is proof that girls just want to have more fun.

There are several curious facts about leprechauns. One is that there is absolutely no evidence of there ever being a female leprechaun. All leprechauns are male.

Also, there is no evidence of leprechauns being capable of asexual reproduction -- which wouldn't be much fun anyway.

So if there are no women leprechauns, and if asexual reproduction is not an option, where did the leprechauns come from? Maybe the legend of the evil spirits and degenerate fairies isn't so farfetched.

Since most fairies are straight-laced, proper women, there are few degenerate fairies reproducing with evil spirits. That explains why there are so few leprechauns.

Those that do exist have been around a long, long time. They are, with very few exceptions, old men. Very old men. Perhaps a thousand years old.

Small old men. They are not the wee characters portrayed in cartoons or Lucky Charms commercials. They are about the size of young boys. Three feet tall or so.

Leprechauns are not evil, per se. As by-products of evil spirits and degenerate fairies, they are neither wholly good nor wholly evil.

But there is one dominant characteristic of old men. You all know at least one old man, so you know what I'm talking about.

Old men are crotchety. Short tempered, set in their ways, grumpy, grouchy, crabby, and irritable. All old men are that way. Now try to imagine an old man who is a thousand years old - he'd be much, much worse.

And now try to imagine an old man who has never been with a woman for a thousand years. He'd be much, much, much worse. It brings a whole meaning to the word cranky.

Leprechauns like to be left alone and are happiest when alone. They do love to party with other leprechauns though. They are adept at the tin whistle and fiddle, and love to dance. They have been known to wear out shoes regularly. This explains why they are such skilled shoemakers.

Leprechauns do have some magical powers. This comes from the degenerate fairy side of the family. If a person is lucky enough to capture a leprechaun, he might use his magic to negotiate his freedom.

All of this leads us into the true story of Lochlann the Leprechaun.

Lochlann lived in County Armagh. This is a heavily forested region and Lochlann kept pretty much to himself.

Sometime in the middle 1800s, when Lochlann was about 950 years old, he was in the forest playing his tin whistle.

A young girl was in the forest picking wild blueberries. Her name was Saoirse. Saoirse heard the whistle in the distance and quietly moved in the direction of the music.

It took her several minutes to make her way closer to the sound. Then she stopped and saw him. There he was, only a few feet away. Oblivious to her, and totally immersed with his whistle, sat Lochlann the Leprechaun.

Saoirse knew the powers of the leprechaun from stories, but had never seen one in real life. Legend had it that a leprechaun will grant you three wishes in exchange for his freedom. Saoirse, being no fool, decided to test the legend.

So she leaped towards the leprechaun, and grabbed him by the foot. She was a slightly built lass, barely over 6 stone in weight (90 pounds), and five feet in height. But the wee leprechaun was only about 3 feet tall and 3 stones and, after all, was nearly 1000 years old. Lochlann was no match for Saoirse and she quickly subdued him.

Lochlann then said: "Please do not hurt me. I only want to be left alone. I promise you, I will grant you three wishes if you set me free."

Saoirse replied, "I will set you free AFTER you've granted my three wishes and not before."

Lochlann: "That's not how it works. I will grant you three wishes AFTER you set me free."

Lochlann was clearly not used to dealing with women. Any man will tell you "There is no negotiating with a woman". Lochlann eventually realized this.

So he asked: "What, then, is your first wish?"

Saoirse said: "I wish to go to America. There I will marry an Irish man. All of the good Irish men have gone to America. So take me to America."

Lochlann replied: "I will grant you your first wish".

And so Lochlann and Saoirse walked out of the Armagh forest and north to Belfast. From there they took the first boat to Liverpool. In Liverpool, they boarded a ship which brought cotton from New Orleans to Liverpool and the huge English linen mills. Once in Liverpool, the ship was refitted with bunk beds and filled up with Irish for the return trip to New Orleans.

Lochlann was covered in a cloak, so that other passengers would not realize that he was a leprechaun. The few people who saw his face through the cloak merely thought he was an ugly boy. They boarded the ship, and eight weeks later they were in New Orleans, U.S.A.

And so Lochlann asked: "What, then, is your second wish?"

Saoirse said: "I wish to marry an Irish man. He must be young, strong, handsome, and willing to marry me. Please you find me such an Irish man?"

Lochlann replied: "I grant your second wish."

Lochlann went immediately to the wharf of the Port of New Orleans. There they saw Irish men and slaves from Africa carrying bales of cotton, and loading them aboard ships bound for Liverpool. And there Lochlann saw a handsome young man. He was tall and strong, and he, coincidentally, was looking for a wife. His name was Peter.

Peter was very slow in speech and it was soon clear in conversation that he was not the brightest star in the galaxy, but Lochlann thought he would do. Lochlann brought Peter to meet Saoirse.

Peter and Saoirse talked for some time, until Saoirse turned to Lochlann and said: "He's a wee bit of a dimwit".

Lochlann said: "You asked for an Irish man who was young, strong and handsome, and willing to marry you. You didn't say anything about him being smart."

And so Saoirse and Peter were married in New Orleans. Lochlann was the best man - or best boy.

Lochlann then asked: "What is your third wish?"

Saoirse said: "I have lived my entire life in Ireland, where it rains almost every day. Indeed, we only know it is summer because the rain gets warmer. My third wish is to live the rest of my days with Peter in a place in which it rarely rains."

Lochlann replied: "I grant you your third wish."

And so the three of them sold all of their possessions, of which they only had a few, and bought a horse and wagon.

They then began a journey west. They traveled for days and days, until they reached a land as far from water as land could be.

There they found another traveler and asked "What is this place called?"

The traveler said "This place is called Texas".

Saoirse said: "Oh no, this will not do. I have no desire to live in Texas."

And so they kept heading west. They reached a place occupied by Navajo people and by a few Spanish missionaries. The place had a small trading post, deep in the Arizona Territory, with a beautiful river running through it.

Saoirse asked: "What is this place called?"

One man at the trading post said: "This place is Aztec in the Territory of Arizona. Someday, we will be in our own state, and we will call it New Mexico. New Mexico will be a wonderful state and we will refer to it as the Land of Enchantment. And the best thing about New Mexico will be that it is not Texas."

And Saoirse asked: "What is this river called?"

And the man said: "It is the Rio de las Animas although some call it Rio de las Animas Perdidas. It means River of Souls or, perhaps, River of Lost Souls."

Saoirse asked: "How do you know that this will someday be a state?"

And the man replied: "Not far from here is a place they call the Four Corners. It is a place where four states meet. If New Mexico doesn't become a state, they would have to call it Two Or Three Corners, and that doesn't make any sense."

Saoirse replied: "I am no longer a lost soul, but I am enchanted with the Land of Enchantment and the future State of New Mexico. I wish to live here forever."

Lochlann said: "This will be your home, and now I have granted you three wishes. It is time for you to set me free."

Saoirse agreed, and said: "Lochlann, you have kept your bargain and now I set you free".

Saoirse and Peter lived the rest of their days in Aztec. This portion of the world did indeed become the State of New Mexico. The two of them were born in Ireland, lived a short while in New Orleans, and died in Aztec, New Mexico. They were both buried at the Aztec Cemetery on Chamisa Street.

Lochlann, in contrast, did not want anything to do with the desert. He meandered around for years, looking for land that reminded him, at least a wee bit, about Ireland.

Months of roaming finally led Lochlann to a heavily forested and hilly region. Lochlann didn't know it, but these hills were known as the Jemez Mountains. That was in the 1800s.

Lochlann, in fact, is still there. He's now over 1,100 years old.

I know he is still there because I heard him.

My daughter and son-in-law live in Sandia Park near Albuquerque. We drove to Aztec this week. We went a bit out of our way to enjoy the Jemez.

We stopped once for a picnic lunch. As we were packing up, I could hear a tune in the distance. It was the distinctive sound of an Irish tin whistle, playing "May Morning Dew". It could have been played by no other than Lochlann the Leprechaun.

And that, at least to me, is solid evidence that leprechauns exist - in Ireland and in New Mexico.

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