

The following is a legend from local folklore. A big 'Thank You!' to Paul, our 'Deliverer of Quality Butcher Meat' from D&A Kennedy's for loaning me the book.

## The Two Hunchbacks



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(Taken from Scotland : Myth, Legend and Folklore by Stuart McHardy )

Near Kilchrenan by Loch Awe there is a fairy mound with an interesting tale. The story is known all over the world and I first heard it as a joke in a Dundee pub, which just illustrates how tenacious the ideas of our ancestors can be!

In a clachan near Kilchrenan there lived two hunchbacks, Hamish and Handy who, although going to the same school, having the same age and suffering from the same deformity, were like chalk and cheese. Hamish was a capable, kindly lad while Handy was an idle, worthless chiel with a wicked tongue. He took great delight in making Hamish miserable any chance he got.

Hamish was deeply in love with a lass called Morag, a local beauty and when one day he realised this, Handy told everyone that such a beauty would have nothing to do with a deformed creature like Hamish. After finishing work that same day Hamish wandered off on his own and sat down on a hillside where he burst into tears. Suddenly he heard his name being spoken and looked up to see a small but beautiful woman dressed all in green. She asked what was wrong and he poured out his heart to her, telling her all about his feelings for Morag and his problems with Handy. The woman smiled and told him to come that night to the wee green knoll, to knock on the hill and say 'Fosgail an dorus' three times - 'Open the door'.

That night Hamish made his way to the knoll and, knocking gently on the hill with the stick he needed to help him walk he said the magic words. At once a door opened and he stepped inside. He found himself in a large well-lit chamber full of the wee folk, with beautiful music filling the air. Seated on a dais in the centre of it all was the woman that he now realised was the Queen of the Fairies herself. She explained that she had taken pity on him and asked if he would like her to cast a spell on Morag to make her love him. Hamish said no, he did not think it fair to have Morag fall for a wee twisted creature like himself.

'What would you have?' asked the queen.

'Make me like other men,' said Hamish, 'straight and tall.' Hardly were the words out of his mouth when he found himself looking down at the little people: his hunchback had disappeared! The queen smiled and asked what he thought of his chances with Morag now. Hamish could hardly speak in his excitement and stammered that he would have to wait and see.

The very next moment he was outside the fairy hill and rushing home. His new appearance gave him new confidence and he went to Morag and told her how he felt. She saw before her a well-built handsome young man with a kindly air and a sparkle in his eye and soon he was ahead of all her other suitors in her affections.

Handy was beside himself with jealousy when he saw what had happened and he came to Hamish demanding how he had managed to change himself. Despite Handy's past actions Hamish was never a lad to hold a grudge and freely told Handy what had happened, stressing that he must say the appropriate phrase only three times, no more no less. Handy immediately started planning what he could do once he too had got rid of his hunchback.

That night, bursting with excitement, Handy approached the knoll. He stamped heavily on the wee hill, shouting out 'Fugal an dorms' three times, then a few times more for good measure. In all he shouted it seven times.

Right enough the door opened and he was pulled in. But it was no scene of merriment and pleasure he found. The fairies were indignant and stood around him ominously. Handy looked at the queen but made no gesture of respect. He was asked what he wanted and he told them he wanted what Hamish had been given. At that point one of the fairies tweaked his coat and the head strong Handy skelped him across the ear. Immediately he found himself birling through the air. The next thing, he was alone on the wee hillock with Hamish's hump on his back as well as his own.

When the story came out he was greatly pitied but many people could not help but laugh, and soon he was left to wander who knows where.

In time Morag agreed to be Hamish's wife and when they were married and raising a family they never passed the fairy hill of Kilchrenan without a good word or kind thought for the little people.