

Wednesday the 24th of June is World Fairy Day. Now I know most of you are smiling as you read this, but we Irish are great believers in the 'little people' and I bet you, if you talk to granny or grandad, they'll have a few good stories to tell you about these folk, stories that may put the hair on the back of your neck standing up!

The story of the Irish fairy began thousands of years ago when the Tuatha De Danann were defeated in battle and forced to live underground. They became known as the People of the Mound. Nowadays, we call these mounds fairy forts. Here's a photo of one



The Fairies are called many names such as *Good Folk*, *The Wee Folk*, *The Gentle People*, *The Fey* and even *The Other Crowd* depending on what county you're from but one thing is certain, people respect and fear them in equal measure. You see the Irish fairy is not like *Tinkerbell* or the *Fairy Godmother*. The Irish fairy could be kind, mischievous (getting up to no good) or malevolent (mean/nasty) towards people.

Sometimes, people were drawn to their dwellings by the sound of beautiful music, where they entered their world only to emerge days, weeks, or even years later. Other times, for the fun of it, fairies would make people get lost and find themselves walking around the same field all night long.

There are many other stories of people who interfered with the property of the fairies by cutting down their trees, building houses on the fairy paths or damaging the forts who paid the price with back luck and more.

Many workers have refused to touch or be part of building plans, which meant disturbing the fairies or their property.

There are many fairy forts and trees all across Co. Louth and Ireland. There may even be one in your area!



The lone white thorn tree is said to be an entrance to the Fairy World
When it flowers in May, the fairies are said to dance for joy around it!

Ask granny, granddad or even your parents/guardians if they have a story about the fairies, listen to them tell it and write it down.

Some Movies about Irish folklore and fairies

- Song of the Sea 2014
- The Secret of Kells 2009
- Darby O 'Gill and the Little People 1959
- The Magical legend of the Leprechauns 1999

The Leprechaun

Legend has it that a leprechaun is a type of fairy that stands about as tall as a three-year-old child. A leprechaun is usually described as a bearded man who wears a green suit and hat. It's believed there are no female leprechauns to be found. The leprechaun is a shoemaker who spends most of his time making and fixing shoes. In fact, some say when a leprechaun is near, you can hear the tap-tap-tapping of his tiny hammer as he drives nails into shoes. These little men are also said to be very mischievous and enjoy playing tricks on those they meet.

Stories about leprechauns have been passed on for generations. Some say that the word "leprechaun" comes from the old Irish word *luchorpán*, which means small body. Others say it developed from an Irish word that means shoemaker.

It's said that every leprechaun has a pot of gold that he hides deep in the Irish countryside. According to legend, the leprechaun must give this treasure away to anyone who captures him. But this little fellow won't let his treasure slip away easily. The story goes that the sneaky leprechaun can fool a person into looking away for an instant. And just like that, he vanishes into his forest home and takes his treasure with him.

In Carlingford, leprechauns are an officially protected species. After a local claimed to see a leprechaun in the area, a law was passed in 2009 to keep the little creatures safe. According to locals, the last living leprechauns - all 236 of them - live in this region.

Even though they're protected here, the town of Carlingford holds a leprechaun hunt each spring. But instead of searching for real leprechauns, people track down ceramic and stuffed ones that have been hidden on a nearby mountain. Those who find a leprechaun win a cash prize.

Questions:

1. How tall is a leprechaun? _____

2. Are there male and female leprechauns? _____

3. What is the leprechaun's occupation? _____
4. Who do think the leprechaun makes shoes for? _____

5. What does the leprechaun like doing for fun? _____

6. What does every leprechaun own? _____

7. What according to legend, does he have to do with it if he is captured?

8. Where in Ireland are leprechauns a protected species? _____

9. Why was a law passed in 2009? _____

10. How many leprechauns live in the area? _____

11. What is held every spring in Carlingford? _____

12. What type of prize do you win if you find a leprechaun? _____

