

## Co Antrim

**Robert Connolly** of Ballybogey generously shared his knowledge as a correspondent in a questionnaire system established by the Ulster Folk Museum in the mid twentieth century. He also agreed to tape record several traditions.

(UFTM C76.67. recorded from Robert Connolly of Urblereagh, Portrush, and referring mainly to his home as a youth, in Lisconnan, Dervock, Co Antrim, at his home by Linda Smith, 30 September 1976)

I remember we were one of the first families to own a motor car. And a man that worked to us at that time, his wife worked in Ballyrashane Creamery in the, I don't know what you would call it, but it was the butter room and she was up to her knees in spring water for, I suppose, a ten hour day all her life, until early married life. In later life she became almost completely paralysed with what would be arthritis now. And I, being the first son that had a licence, I used to get the job of taking her to a man near Ballymoney called X that had a cure, and he could cure anything from erysipelas to toothache. But we took this woman, her husband and me, big heavy woman, we got her uxtered into the car and we took her to this man, and I asked him about his cures, and he didn't give me much information, but I remember that he just rubbed his hands one on another like that for a while, and rolled up his sleeves like I have mine now, and he took the woman into the, I suppose it was the upper room, it was the room off the kitchen, off the living quarters of the farmhouse. And he rubbed the pain out of her legs. He took the pain out of her toes. He believed in bringing the pain out, like to the, if you'd a headache, you brought it out at your forehead. If you'd a pain in your shoulder, he took it out at your fingers. This woman had a pain in her legs, he took it out at her toes, by rubbing, just.

## Co Armagh

**Brigid Murphy** learned many of her tales from her mother. This is her version of a very popular tale, often known as 'Hudden and Dudden.'

(UFTM PR7. Recorded from Brigid Murphy of Forkhill, Co Armagh, by Linda Ballard and Clifford Harkness in the studio of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, 5 June 1985.)

Well, once upon a time there were these three men lived, they were all cousins and they lived in two neighbouring farms. Hudden and Dudden were two brothers, and Donal lived with his mother in another little farm. Hudden and Dudden were the easy going type, that wasn't too particular about getting up too early, or cultivating their lands too good, or anything like that. And Donal was just the opposite. Their cousin, Donal, was just the opposite. And he laboured very hard to have a good crop, and he'd be up early in the morning, and he'd have the best crop in the country, and he'd the best cattle. He hadn't many, but they'd be in the best condition and they'd be well looked after. And Hudden and Dudden's mother was always holding up Donal as an example to her two sons, so of course, naturally there was a lot of jealousy among them. Oh, Hudden and Dudden, they ploughed their land with bullocks at that time, they'd no horses. And Hudden and Dudden made it up that they would kill Donal's bullock, and then he'd have nothing to cultivate the land with, and he wouldn't be getting on so well and they would have a little bit of peace for a while. So they went out one night when Donal was in bed, and they killed the bullock, and when he got up in the morning, the bullock was dead in the field. So he skinned the bullock, and he took it to, into the town, put the skin on his shoulders and took it into the town, to sell it. And as he was going the road, a magpie lit on his shoulder, pecking at

the hide. And the magpie said 'Good morning' to Donal, and asked him where he was going, and he said that he was going into the town to sell the hide. So they went along the road, and the magpie kept chattering away to Donal. And when they went into the town, Donal went and sold the hide for a few shillings. And he went into a tavern for to have, to get a drink, and the magpie was still on his shoulder, and the magpie was talking to him, and he asked for a drink and the woman went to get the whiskey or whatever it was he had asked for. And she asked, 'Is that a talking magpie you have?' and he said, 'Yes, it is.'

And she said, 'What is he saying?'

'Well, he's saying that you have better drink over in that corner over there than what you are filling out for me now.'

So, well she says, 'He's right, so I have.'

'Well,' he said, 'you'd better go and get it.'

So she went and got the drink that was better than what she had been trying to palm unto him, and she said, 'Would you sell the magpie? I'd love to have that magpie, will you sell him?' and he said 'Oh no, I wouldn't sell him,' he said, 'money wouldn't buy him.' So she said, 'Well, I'll give you, I'll make it well worth your while,' she said, 'if you sell him.' So in the end they came a bargain, and Donal got the half, the full of his hat of coins, of gold coins, of course, they would be at that time. And he was well pleased with himself, and he left the magpie with the woman.

And he came home, and he showed the hatful of money to Hudden and Dudden that he had got for the hide. Well, they had two bullocks, and they thought, 'Well, if he got that for one hide, we can double it.' And they killed their two bullocks and took them into the fair and of course, all they could get for them was a few shillings. And they came back, and they were determined that they would do something with Donal, they'd have to kill him, this time, they couldn't just go on the way they were going on. And Donal knew that they were planning something, and he asked his mother would she sleep in his bed that night, and he put, they wore caps in those nighttimes, they wore a cap in bed. And he put his cap on the mother, and she was sleeping in his bed, and Hudden and Dudden came to kill him and they reached in through the window and struck the old woman with the hatchet, and that was the end of her. So next morning when Donal got up and seen his mother dead, he dressed her up and he carried her in on his back to the town to get a coffin for her. And he left her standing, when he went into the town, he left her standing beside this wall, and there was a draw well beside the wall, and he went into the tavern to get a cup of tea, and he said to the man, 'Would you go out and call my mother,' he said, 'in for a cup of tea. I'm sure,' he says, 'she's cold. She's standing over there at the wall.' And he said, 'Now, she can't hear too good, so you'd better call her loud, and if she doesn't answer you, give her a wee bit of a shake, because she mightn't hear you at all.' So the man went out and he called to the woman, and of course the woman didn't hear, and he went over and gave her a bit of a shake, and she fell down into this well. So then there was an awful *hoho*, the woman was in the well, and the town, half of the town gathered to pull her up out of it, and when they pulled her up, of course, she was dead. And Donal was in an awful state about his mother and everybody was sorry for him, and the man from the tavern said that he would give him some money to compensate for, just it was an accident, but he would give him something. So the townspeople were so sorry for him that they made a great collection. And he got the coffin, put the old woman into it and buried her there, came home again with his hat full of money, and he met Hudden and Dudden and he told them that he had taken his mother into town to get a coffin, 'But,' he said, they're buying old bones to make gunpowder. And,' he says, 'I got an awful price. Look at all the money I got for her.' So they decided it was time their mother was going too, for to make a bit of money, and they killed their own mother and took her into the town, and when they took her into the town, sure, everybody, the people stoned them

out of the town. They walked up and down shouting, 'Old bones for gunpowder. Old bones for gunpowder.' And the people got round them and stoned them out of the town altogether.

So they came home this time and they thought, well, it was time that they done away with Donal. And they got Donal and they put him in a sack and they tied him up in this sack, and they threw him into a lake. And Donal didn't sink in the lake, and he was rowing up and down in the sack, and this man came along, and he had a big drove of cattle with him. And Donal was singing, and the man said to him, 'You're very happy to be in there,' he said, 'what makes you so happy?'

He said, 'I'm very happy because I'm going to heaven in this sack.'

And he says, 'You wouldn't swap places with me?'

'Oh no,' Donal says, 'I'll not,' he says, 'because I know where I'm going,' he says, 'and you don't.'

So in the long run he made a bargain with the man, he says, 'I'd give you all these cattle, he says, 'if you'd swap places with me.' So in the long run Donal was persuaded to be pulled out of the lake, and take the cattle, and he put the man into the sack and he threw him into the lake, and the man went down to the bottom of the lake, and that was that.

So Donal came home with his drove of cattle, and he met Hudden and Dudden, and they asked him where did he get the cattle. And he said, 'Do you know that spot where you threw me into the lake? Well,' he said, 'I went down there and underneath that lake there's a beautiful valley, and it's full up with cattle,' he says, 'and you can take as many as you like.' He said, 'This is all I could take, because I didn't have any help.' So Hudden and Dudden decided this was a handy way of getting cattle, and they asked him would he come back and show them exactly where he went down. And when they got to the lake, Hudden jumped in first, and he went down, and when he came back up again, he shouted, 'Help, help.'

And Dudden says, 'What is he shouting?'

He says, 'He's shouting for help, he mustn't be able to manage all the cattle,' he says, 'we'll have to go and give him a hand.'

So Dudden wasn't too anxious for to jump into the lake, and he hesitated for a while, and Donal says, 'Well, if you're not going, I'm going to go myself,' he said, 'will you stand back out of my way.' So when Dudden heard this, he jumped into the lake and the two of them went down to the bottom, and that was the end of Hudden and Dudden, and Donal came home and he had his cattle and his two farms, and lived happily ever after. So that's the whole of that.

**Owney O'Neill** learned many of his stories, including this one, from his mother. This tale is told only in Ireland, and has not been recorded in other countries.

(UFTM C76.43, recorded in Camlough, Co Armagh on 4 August, 1976 by Linda Smith with Joe Bradley.)

It was a family that had their farm up in Ballynaleck. Well now, this is this side of the lake, and along the shore of the lake there's great rocks and stones. As far as I know, the townland of Ballynaleck gets its name from these rocks. 'The Town of the Flagstones', that's what it's supposed to mean. Now, this was a fairly prosperous farmer. He had his farm on the shore of that lake. And the youngest member of the family, he was a bit wayward, a bit wild, you see? And he sent this fellow into Newry, for to get goods, in a horse and cart. And he gave him instructions to get the horse shod at the blacksmith's shop that was there on the quay,

McClelland's blacksmith's shop. He was to get the horse shod there first, and then he was to get his other goods that he had to get. But he was first to go to the blacksmith. So he drove into Newry from Camlough here. And he went to the blacksmith's shop with the horse and cart. And there was five or six horses to be shod in front of him. So the blacksmith said, 'Loose your horse out of the cart, and tie him up here,' he says, 'and if you've any business to transact,' he says, 'through the town,' go ahead and do it, and when you come back,' he says, 'I'll have your horse shod.'

So fair enough, he loosed the horse out, and tied him up, and stood the cart up on its shafts, and went away, went right up the quay, and crossed over yonder at Monaghan Street, and away down the other quay, down as far as the basin. Now, this basin opens out unto Carlingford Lough. You see? And boats comes in there. In fact, there was a boat in at that time, delivering timber. And this fellow always had a hankering to go to sea. Mad about the sea! So, he was standing looking at this boat, and one of the crew came down the gangway and saw him, and started to talk to him, You see?

So he says, 'Are you looking for a job?' he says.

He pricked up his ears at this. 'Aye,' says he, 'I am.'

'Well,' says he, 'we're short handed. Short of a crew. And,' he says, 'we'll be sailing with the tide.' Well now, the tide would be going out about four o'clock. 'And,' he says, 'if you want a job on this boat,' he says, 'member of the crew on this boat, if you go aboard,' he says, 'and see the first mate.'

So he says, 'I'll take you up.'

So he went up the gangway with this fellow, unto the boat. And he introduced him to the first mate and all. 'Certainly.' They signed him on, He was signed on, as a member of the crew. And he sailed away at four o'clock, and forgot all about the horse and cart and goods and all. Went away to sea. And he was at sea for a couple of months. Finally, he sailed back to Ireland again, but not in Newry. Other parts of Ireland. But he went on ahead, he stayed at sea on this boat, and the final outcome of that was, the boat was shipwrecked, and she was lost in the channel, and he was the only survivor. Washed up on this shore. Didn't know where he was. And he was battered and bleeding and everything else. And he discovered, when he came to his senses and all, and he gained consciousness, that he was in a strange country. A very, very flat country. No ditches nor nothing.

So he decided he'd walk on till he come to a house. So, he staggered on ahead and right enough he came to a house, and he rapped at the door. And a girl opened the door to him and spoke in to the rest of them in the house on some foreign language that he didn't know. So she took him in. And there was just five or six people in the house. And he was all battered, you know, and wet and all. So they looked after him. They got him dry clothes, they sat him up to the fire, and they put on food for him, they made him very comfortable. And this girl that opened the door for him at first went out, out of the house, and went away and got an old man. And this old man appeared, and he could speak broken English, And he told him, he said, 'You're in Denmark. That's where you are now. So,' he says, these people will look after you. You'll be well cared for. Rest up here for a while,' he says, for a few days. And after a few days has elapsed,' he says, 'I'll come back again, and I'll take you to the nearest town, the nearest seaport town, where you will get a boat.' He told him all that happened, you see.

O that was alright, he stayed there and they looked after him and were very kind to him, done everything for him. And then he began to get restless, after four or five days, you see? But none of them could talk to him, none of them understood English. So after four or five days, he began to show this restlessness, and the girl went away, and got the old man. So he came back again, and he said, 'Well, you're alright now,' he says, 'you look a lot better than the last time I saw you.'

'Yes,' he says, 'very, very kind and very good to me,' he says, 'I don't know what I'll do,' he says, 'to repay this kindness.'

'Oh,' he says, 'that can be done. You can do that very simply.'

He says, 'How will I do it?'

'Well,' says he, 'you came from Ireland?'

'Yes.'

'The north of Ireland?'

'Yes.'

'From Camlough?'

'Yes,' he says, 'Camlough.'

'Camlough Lake?' the old man says.

'Well, our farm,' he says, 'runs down to the shore of the lake.'

'Right, well now, when you go back to Ireland,' he says, 'go down to the lake on Hallow Eve night and catch me six perch. You know what perch are?'

'Oh yes,' he says, 'many a time I caught them.'

Well now, Camlough Lake is famed for its perch. You see? 'Catch six perch. Pack them in a box. Post them to us, bring them to us or get them here whatever way you can.'

'So that's all,' he says, 'I have to do?'

'Yes, that's all you have to do.'

So he came home. Took him down the town, he got on a boat, and all, and he came home. He was dying to get home then, to get down to the lake to fish. So when he arrived home, they were delighted to see him. They thought he was drowned, you see, because the horse and cart and everything was left in McClelland's, the blacksmith's shop, and they didn't know where he was. So he stayed at home for a day or two, and then, it would be near top the end of October, you see? He waited to Hallow Eve night, and he took his fishing rod, and he went away down to the lake, and he caught about a dozen perch, sizeable, good perch. And he packed them up in a boot box, tied them up and made them into a parcel. And then he was going mad to get back to the sea again. You see?

So, eventually he arrived back. He got into a boat in Newry and all, and he arrived, back in the Basin, he arrived back again in Denmark, and he made his way to this house. He knew where the house was, so he made his way to it. And when they saw him coming, they were delighted. And he had this big parcel with him. And the girl went away and got the old man. This was her grandfather, you see? They got him. And he nearly wrung the hand off him, he was that delighted to see him. And he says, 'You done what I asked you to do?'

'Yes,' he says, 'I caught you about a dozen perch.'

'That's very good.' says he.

So they opened up the parcel and he took the perch out, and they went away and got a pot. And he watched everything. They made him a feed, you see? And set him over to the table to keep him occupied, you see? And they put the perch on, in this pot, and water in it, and put the perch on to boil. So he thought it very strange, like they didn't clean them or anything.

But anyway, when the perch were boiled and all, he was just about finishing his food and all, and they took the pot, and they left it in the middle of the floor, and every one of them got wee stools, and they sat round the pot. And each one of them dipped his finger in the pot, in the water that the perch was boiled in, and rubbed it on his eyelids. And every time they did this, there was an awful burst of excitement. You see? They started to shout and cheer and everything, when they rubbed the water the perch was boiled in on their eyelids. Caused an awful lot of excitement, when they'd look out the window, you see.

So he stole over, when he got them occupied, and got his hand in between them, and he dipped his finger in the water. You see? And rubbed it on his eyelids, and looked out through the window. And there was his farm! The farm his father was the owner of, this farm at Ballynaleck. He could see that part of the farm where it runs on down to the shore, all the big rocks and everything. And everything was shining gold. The rocks were all gold. The old man says to him, 'You'll be well rewarded,' he says, 'for this night's work.' 'Ah,' he says, 'I don't want any of your reward.' He says, 'When I go home,' he says, 'I'll get my reward. For look at the gold,' he says, 'that's on our land.' So the old man said, 'What eye do you see that out of?' He says, 'I saw it out of that eye there.' pointing at his right eye. Well, the old fellow went for him. 'You'll never see out of that eye again.' And they tried to blind him. They done their best and all, and they battered him, and they beat him out of the house. And he had to run for his life. But it wasn't too hard to run, for he was very anxious to get home.

So he arrives home again, back in Camlough again, after a month or two, and he went mad to get home to his own, to see all this gold. But when he arrived home, the land and the rocks and all was just as he had left it. Everything was just as usual. Now that was supposed to be the Danes' Gold, that the Danes captured in holy places, monasteries and churches and all. The gold plate, chalices and everything else was all melted down into gold. And they had to fly out of Ireland so quick that they didn't get taking it with them, and it's supposed to be buried, a lot of it, in Ireland. The Danes' Gold is something to do with the perch in Camlough Lake. You see, it took the water that the perch was boiled in to be able to see that.

## **Belfast**

**Agnes Moody** tells stories reflecting the lasting place of Titanic in the memory of the city and of Northern Ireland. These traditions relate to a broader narrative range reflecting the opinion that the fate of the ship was preordained, and was not determined by the levels of the skills of those involved in her construction. Oral narrative tradition provides examples to support the very high level of craftsmanship attained by the work force associated with Titanic. For example, Agnes comments on furniture, destined for the Titanic but which remained in Belfast, saying, 'If you had seen the detail, it was really, really craftsmen that done it....., the hand carving round the beds and the cabinets, it was really unbelievable.' The motif '1690' in association with Titanic and her fate is quite widespread.

(UFTM CD2006.2, Linda Ballard recorded Agnes Moody in her home, North Belfast, 19 October 2005.)

A M My grandfather, Granda Johnston, he worked on the Titanic, and all the Roman Catholics that worked in the shipyard said that the Titanic was doomed from the start because they worked on a Sunday, the Lord's Day. Not only the Roman Catholics, the good living ones and all in the shipyard said it was doomed because they worked on the Lord's Day on it.

LB. So everybody thought that? The whole workforce?

A M No, no, just the devout Protestants and the devout Catholics. You know them, they'd eat the altar rails. Somebody that's really holier than thou, you know, you'd have said, 'She eats the altar rails.' You know? I used to hear my mummy saying that. But they said that it was doomed from the start, because they worked on it on a Sunday afternoon. They had to, because they were under that much pressure to get the ship built. And whenever it got to Cobh, in the Republic of Ireland. What do you call the place? Queenstown, that was the old name for it. And that's where the Titanic, that was her last stop, and it was the very last place she got to before she started across the Atlantic. And see the number that was on the Titanic, whenever they looked, what was the number? 1690. That is true, when they looked, (everything is backward in a mirror,) at it in the window, when the ship was docked, it was 1690. Now that's true, like. I remember Granda Johnston saying that, and the Roman Catholics in the shipyard all said, 'That ship's doomed for working on a Sunday and having that date on it. 1690.' But it wasn't a date, it was just the number of the job. That's what he said it was, it was the job number, and it was 1690.

## Co Down

**Francis McPolin**, who was head master of Ballymaghera Boys' School, near Hilltown, was a distinguished collector of folk lore, and the following story is taken from his notebooks. We owe the preservation of this story to Dr McPolin's friend, Sheila St Clair, who with Dr McPolin's agreement had his notebooks transcribed before his death. The story of Ashy Pelt is presented here exactly as it is found in St Clair's transcript, along with the information recorded by Dr McPolin about the narrators from whom he heard it. It is interesting to compare the fates of the wicked (witch) queen in this tale and of the wicked queen in Frank McKenna's story, which is included here in the selection for Co Tyrone.

(Digitised by Cathy Preston.)

### THE STORY OF ASHY PELT AND THE DRY LAND BOAT

Told to me by Felix McPolin (40) Stang. Felix heard it from his father Denis McPolin who died in 1929 at the age of 72. This Denis McPolin had a fund of such tales which he never tired of telling on winter nights to ceidleidhiers who came to play cards with him. He was quite illiterate, but a grand story-teller.

Now for the story.....

Once upon a time a poor man had three sons. The two eldest were smart fellows and good workers. Both of them learned to be carpenters and got on well at the trade. But the youngest was a wee gisterac who was good for nothing but sitting, shivering in front of the fire with his toes in the ashes and so they called him Ashy Pet.

At that time the King of the East had a lovely daughter, but he could not decide how to find out who was good enough to marry her. So he consulted an old witch that lived in his palace and asked her to advise him how to discover if any young man in the kingdom was clever enough and good enough to make a husband for the princess. The old witch told him to give his daughter in marriage to the first young man who would make a boat fit to sail on dry land. So the King sent word all through his kingdom that any young man who could make a dry land boat was to come to the palace and marry the princess.

When the three brothers heard this the eldest set off to the wood with his hammers and saws in a bag and a piece of oat bread in his pocket to see could he make a dry land boat when he reached the wood, he worked away till about noon cutting down trees to make the boat. Then he sat down to eat his lunch. Just as he was beginning to eat the piece of oat bread he had in his pocket up came a wee woman and asked him for a bit of bread. "I have only enough for myself", said the young man, and the wee woman on hearing that walked away. After a while the young man got to his feet and commenced to make the boat. At last he gave up the attempt and went away home, but never mentioned about the wee woman, for he forgot all about her.

Next day the second brother set off to the wood with his hammers and saws in a bag and a piece of oat bread in his pocket to see could he make a dry land boat. When he got to the wood he got to work at once and worked away till about noon cutting down trees to make the boat. Then he sat down to eat his lunch. Just as he took the piece of oat bread out of his pocket and was beginning to eat it up came the same wee woman and asked him for a bit of bread. "I have only enough for myself", said the second brother, and with that the wee woman turned and walked away. After a while the second brother got to his feet and commenced to make at the boat. But try as he would he could not make a boat to sail on dry land. At last he had to give it up and go home. When he got home he told all that had happened to him and about the wee woman that wanted some of his bread. Anyhow the two elder brothers decided that it was impossible to make a dry land boat and that there was no use in trying it anymore.

Next morning Ashy Pet began searching for the tools wanting to go to the wood to make a dry land boat. When the two elder brothers heard what he was thinking of doing they began to laugh and jeer at him. "How could the likes of you make a dry land boat", they said "You that couldn't carry a can of water". "Well", said Ashy Pet, "I can only be beaten", and with that he gathered the tools into a bag and put two good farls of oaten bread in his pocket and off to the wood.

When he reached the wood he commenced hacking at a tree and hacked on till about noon. Then he sat down to eat his lunch. Just as he was taking the oat bread out of his pocket up stepped the wee old woman and asked him for a bit of bread. "To be sure", said he "I'll give you half my lunch", and he gave her one of the farls. She took it and thanked him. Then she asked him what he was trying to do, and he told her. "I am trying", he said "To make a dry land boat to bring me to the King's palace. I want to marry the King's daughter, for the King promised to give her to the first man who comes to the palace sailing a dry land boat".

"Very well", said the wee woman, "I'll see if I can help you". With that she put Ashy Pet into a deep sleep and when he awoke there was a boat sailing down from the wood heading in the direction of the King's palace. In jumped Ashy Pelt and on sailed the boat.

As the boat was sailing along through the mountains Ashy Pelt heard great smashing going on somewhere up the mountain side. So he looked up to see what was going on. What do you think he saw? A big man with his back turned to the mountain hopping up and down on his buttocks smashing the rocks with his hips. "What are you doing there?", shouts Ashy Pelt. "I am breaking stones with my hips", said the man "They call me Hard Hips and this is my job. I have to have all these stones broken before night". "Will you get into this boat?", said Ashy Pelt "and come along with me to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live in the palace with me". "Right" says Hard Hips, and he jumped into the boat and wherever the ground was too rocky for the boat to sail over he jumped out and broke all the stones with his hips and smoothed the way.

On they sailed till they came to a big wood. As they were coming along the edge of the wood Ashy Pelt heard a great noise as of falling trees. He looked up into the wood and what do you think he saw? A big leggy man running through the wood mowing down the trees on both sides right and left, with his shins. "What are you doing there?", shouts Ashy Pelt. "I am cutting down these trees with my shins", said the man, "They call me Sharp Shins and this is my job. I must have these trees all cut down before night".

"Will you get into this boat?" said Ashy Pelt "and come along with us to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live in the King's palace with me. "Right", says Sharp Shins, and he jumped into the boat, and wherever the trees blocked the way of the boat he jumped out and mowed them down with his shins.

So they sailed on, Ashy Pelt, Hard Hips and Sharp Shins, till they came to a big common and there they saw a man running like the March wind on one leg, the other tied up a sling behind his back. "What are you running about?", shouts Ashy Pelt. "I am catching rabbits and hares on this common", said the man. "They call be Run Well, and I have to keep one leg tied up behind my back for fear I would run too fast and run over these rabbits and hares. This is my job, and I must have all the rabbits and hares on this common caught before night.

"Will you get into this boat", said Ashy Pelt, "and come along with us to the King's palace, I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live with us in the palace". "Right", said Run Well, and he jumped in to the boat.

In they sailed heading for the King's palace. When they came to the top of a hill they saw a man with his hand to his fore-head shading his eyes and staring away into the distance. "What are you watching for?", asked Ashy Pelt. "I am watching two midges fighting on the top of a mounting, seventy-five miles away. My name is See Well". "Will you get into this boat?", said Ashy Pelt, "and come along with us to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live in the palace with me". "Right", says See Well, and he jumped into the boat.

On they sailed, See Well, Run Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips and Ashy Pelt, in the dry land boat, heading for the King's palace. As they were sailing past a big flower garden they saw a man with a long barrelled gun to his eye taking aim at something away in the distance.

"What are you trying to shoot?", asked Ash Pelt. "I am shooting at a midge sixty five miles away", said the man. "My name is Shoot Well" and I am trying to put a ball through the midge's right eye. My job is to shoot midges all day".

"Will you get into this boat", said Ashy Pelt, "and come with us to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter, and you can come and live in the palace with me". "Right", says Shoot Well, and he jumped in to the boat.

On they sailed, See Well, Run Well, Shoot Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips and Ashy Pelt, heading for the King's palace.

When they were crossing over a plain they saw a man on his knees on the ground holding a blade of grass to his ear as if he were listening to something. "What are you doing there?", asked Ashy Pelt. "I am trying to hear the grass growing", says the man. "My name is Hear Well, and I am trying to make out what they are saying away at the far edge of the world". "Will you get into this boat", said Ashy Pelt, "and come with us to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live with me in the palace". "Right", says Hear Well, and he jumped into the boat.

On they sailed, See Well, Hear Well, Run Well, Shoot Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips, and Ashy Pelt, in the dry land boat heading for the King's palace.

When they were passing along the side of a road they saw a man driving a flock of cattle to the mountain. He was waving a long stick in his hand. "What are you trying to do with your stick?", asked Ashy Pelt. "I am trying to ceap that cow in front half a mile up the road" said he. "They call me Long Stock, and my job is to herd these cattle and not let any of them go astray".

"Will you get into this boat", said Ashy Pelt, "and come along with us to the King's palace. I am going to marry the King's daughter and you can come and live in the palace with me". "Right", said Long Stick, and he jumped into the boat.

On they went, See Well, Hear Well, Run Well, Shoot Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips, Long Stick and Ashy Pelt, sailing in the dry land boat heading for the King's palace.

When the King saw the kind of gistreac that he was going to have for a son-in-law, he felt terribly upset and annoyed and was going to kill the old witch who had advised him to give his daughter to the first man to come to the palace sailing in a dry land boat. But the witch to save her live told the King that she could put him on a plan which would prevent Ashy Pelt claiming the princess. So she and the King went away to a private room at the far end of the palace and began to plot and plan how best to prevent Ashy Pelt claiming the princess for his wife.

In the meantime Ashy Pelt and his seven friends were kept waiting in a big parlour close to the main entrance to the palace. While they were waiting Hear Well exclaimed, "I hear!, I hear!". "What do you hear?", said Ashy Pelt. "I hear the Queen saying that she will invite us all to dinner in the King's dining room and that she will have a chair for the captain of the boat here and that there will be a cushion on it filled with broken glass and pins and needles to stick in his hips and kill him when he sits down". "Very good", say Hard Hips to Ashy Pelt, "I'll sit on that chair before you, and when I get up you can take your seat on it, and it won't do you any harm".

In a short time a servant came in to say the dinner was ready and that the King and Queen wanted the captain and the crew to dine with them. So Ashy Pelt and his seven companions walked into the dining room one after the other. When they entered the room a servant pointed to Ashy Pelt to take his seat beside the Princess. But Hard Hips as if by mistake stepped up and popped down on the chair meant for Ashy Pelt. Then, pretending that he had discovered his mistake he rose up and apologised and walked down to the other end of the table and took his place there.

Then Ashy Pelt stepped up and sat beside the Princess smiling all over, and he and his companions enjoyed the best dinner ever they had had in their lives. When dinner was over the King sent for the witch to kill her for failing in her plans to prevent Ashy Pelt marrying his daughter. But the witch begged for another chance and she and the King went away to the same secret corner of the palace to consult how to prevent Ashy Pelt marrying the Princess.

In the meantime Ashy Pelt and his seven friends were kept waiting in the same big room as before. While they were waiting Hear Well spoke up "I hear! I hear!". "What do you hear?", says Ashy Pelt, "I hear them saying", says Hear Well, "that the captain here cannot marry the Princess unless we are able to cut down the grove of trees growing behind the palace all in one day". "Very good, says Sharp Shines, "I'll have to see to that".

Then the King sent for Ashy Pelt and his friends and told him he would not let the Captain marry his daughter unless he and his companions cut down the grove of trees behind the palace the next day.

Next morning the whole of them got up early and when they got their breakfast they went out to view the grove. Sharp Shins then started to run up and down through the grove moving down the trees right and left with his shins as he went. Before half-an-hour the trees were all cut down and Ashy Pelt presented himself before the King to say that the job was done and that he was ready for the marriage.

When the King saw that the trees were all cut down he sent for the witch to kill her for failing to think of a plan to prevent Ashy Pelt marrying his daughter. But she still begged for a chance saying that she would surely plan a test this time that neither the Captain nor any of his crew would be able to stand. So she and the King consulted in secret again while the friends waited in the same room as before. While they were waiting Hear Well exclaimed, "I hear!, I hear!". "What do you hear?", asked Ashy Pelt. "I hear", says Hear Well, "that the Queen is going to challenge any of us to run a race with her to the well at the edge of the earth and which-ever first returns to the palace with a bottle of water from that well is to be the winner and that he won't give his daughter to the captain here unless some one of us can run harder than the Queen". "Very well", says Run Well, "I'll see what I can do about that".

Then the King sent for Ashy Pelt and his crew and explained the terms to them. He would not, he said, let his daughter marry the Captain unless he or one of his crew could beat the Queen in a race to the edge of the earth for a bottle of water. With that Run Well stepped forward and asked for an empty bottle as he was willing to take up the Queen's challenge. Then he and the witch got an empty bottle each and the race began.

When Run Well and the witch had run for hundreds of miles both of them got tired and neither of them seemed to be winning.

At last the witch said to Run Well, "Where is the use in killing ourselves running like this all day for the King or his daughter either. Can't we sit down to rest and let the King and his daughter go there". Run Well agreed and both of them sat down to rest under the shade of a big tree.

While they were seated the old witch stuck a magic pin in Run Well's shoulder and this put him into a deep sleep. Then she jumped to her feet and made off like the devil spinning heather with the empty bottle in her hand making for the edge of the earth.

All this time Ashy Pelt, See Well, Hear Well, Shoot Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips and Long Stock were standing in front of the King's palace waiting to see the result of the race. While they were waiting Hear Well put his hand behind his ear and exclaimed, "I hear!, I hear!", "what do you hear?" cried they all. "I hear the Queen advising Run Well to sit down and rest" was the answer. Then See Well put his hand to his forehead and looked away into the distance. "I see!", "I see!", he exclaimed. "What do you see?", cried they all. "I see Run Well lying sound asleep under the shade of the tree", said he. "With something like a pin stuck in his right shoulder". "Do you see any sign of the Queen?", they inquired. "Yes", said See Well, "She is running like the wind away towards the edge of the earth. Then Shoot Well raised his gun, took steady aim and with the first shot hit the magic pin and lifted it clean out of Run Well's shoulder.

As soon as the pin left this shoulder Run Well woke up and jumped to his feet. He looked round for the Queen but she was just going out of sight away away in the distance running her might. Then Run Well took to his heels with all his might and very soon pulled up on the old witch and passed her. He filled his bottle at the magic well and back to the palace for all he was worth and was first to reach it.

When the King saw that the witch had lost the race he intended to kill her at once, but she pleaded for one more chance saying she would risk her life to prevent the captain of the dry land boat marrying the Princess. So the witch and the King went away into the private room to consult and Ashy Pelt, See Well, Hear Well, Run Well, Shoot Well, Sharp Shins, Hard Hips and Long Stick were left waiting in the same big room as before. While they were waiting Hear Well exclaimed, "I hear!", "I hear!". "What do you hear?", asked Ashy Pelt. "I hear the Queen saying she will climb to the top of the highest tower in the palace and the King has agreed not to give his daughter in marriage to the captain here unless some of us can reach up from the ground and touch the Queen on the head while she is standing on top of the tower. "Very well", says Long Stick, "I'll see what I can do".

Then the King sent for Ashy Pelt and his crew and explained his terms to them. The Queen, he said would be up to the top of a certain tower and if any of the crew could stretch up to her and touch her on the head while she stood there his daughter would marry the Captain next morning. So the witch climbed up the tower and stood full length on the top of it. As soon as she arrived at the top and stood there looking down at Ashy Pelt and his friends, Long Stick made one wind at her struck her on the top of the skull with his stick and brought her to earth, dead as pork.

Next morning Ashy Pelt married the beautiful Princess and he and his wife and the King and the seven heroes all lived happily together for many years.

And now my story's ended,  
I hope you're not offended,  
Landle-adle.  
The wee round table,  
If the cock's tail had been stronger,  
My story would have been long.  
Ladle-adle  
The wee round table.

NOTE: The above story was told me in the first instance by Felix McPolin who heard his father at it. It was also told to be in substantially the same terms by Mr James Campbell (84) of Ballinran, Kilkeel. Mr Campbell was in bed when I called with him on 24 November 1945, but he roused himself up and sent through the story for me repeating with evident satisfaction the concluding jingle, which by the way I had not previously heard.

**Mr Gibson**, a storyteller from Tullnagee, near Comber, joined in a recording session with his brother in law, Mr McKibben. The two families lived across the road from each other, and had a strong, shared repertoire of tales.

(UFTM C77.36, recorded from Jacob Gibson by Linda Smith, Tullynagee, near Comber, 4 April 1977)

I heard them saying this chap in Comber, now this was a Comber fair, now this was many years ago, I heard my father at this, that this fellow was carrying on rightly in the Square. It was packed, you see, they always had a fair, every six months, and this was where they hired men for six months, you see? And this fellow was carrying on a bit in the Square, anyway, and they had been sitting up, there was a public house just in the Square, and two or three of these men had been sitting right up on the top windows, watching out, and they had been watching this fellow carrying on, and this other fellow says, 'Wait till you see this,' he says, 'I'll make more fun out of him.' He just stuck a pair of horns on him. That was the Black Art.

## Co Fermanagh

**George Sheridan** presented manuscript notebooks to the Ulster Folk Museum during the 1960s, and later was recorded on numerous occasions for the audio archive. This account of traditional games is taken from his notebook, preserved in the archive of the museum as V-17-4. The notebook was transcribed by Ginny Fugarino of the Folklore Program, Dept of English, University of Houston, Texas. 'Dallóg' is the Gaelic word for 'blind man's buff', 'dall' meaning 'blind'.

The most popular game for the country kitchen was doll-oge, or blind man's buff. We always called it dolloge. It was a rough game, but then all the old country games were rough. When we were small, and if other youngsters were in we would all take off our shoes and skip along so quietly in our bare feet. Sometimes when the house would be full of ceilighers, the dolloge would be very rough. Someone would get it on in a way that he could see a little, and if there was anyone a wee bit soft, he would make a dead set at him or her, and the fun would be fast and furious. The fire would be brought off the hearth with the girls' skirts, while the woman of the house would be trying to save the child on her knee.

Another game was, all or everyone sat round the house while one stood in the middle of the kitchen, or with his back to the fire. And he would give everyone a name, a very long name, like Jimie mutler-flutter-jug's or Black Sally-oak-Sapleen, so on. Then he would say 'The Priest of the Parish lost his hat. Some say this and some say that, but I say' and he would say someone's name. He would have a rod in his hand, and he would cut the ears off the person he named till they said their name. Usually there was some one to pick at , and the unfortunate one got walloped because he couldn't get his name out in time.

The repertoire of **Taddy McGloin**, who worked in Belleek Pottery, includes the following stories about stoats. Both these traditions are well known, but the animal concerned is sometimes wrongly identified as a weasel. Taddy correctly points out that weasels are not found in Ireland.

(UFTM C78.107, recorded by Linda Smith, at the home of Taddy McGloin in Belleek, 4 November 1978.)

T McG     There's a thing, do you ever hear tell of it, a stoat's funeral?

LS         No, tell me about that

T McG     Did you never hear about that? Well, I have heard three people, now the young fellow in the pottery yonder beside me has actually seen one, and I was questioning him on it, I thought he was only kidding me, but I've heard it on a couple of occasions, from two different men, they seen these stoats all coming along carrying a dead stoat, you know? There'd be maybe about ten or twelve and in come cases there'd be about two dozen of them, carrying a dead stoat. And I was asking this young fellow did he not follow it on, you know, and see what they were going to do, 'Aw', he said, the father wouldn't allow him, he said, it was unlucky, to have anything got to do with it. It's supposed to be a stoat's funeral. And I've heard two men talking about the same thing. There's a fellow comes down here and he was telling me he was coming from school one day, a crowd of lads coming through the fields, you know? And he came on this, and the weasels kind of crossed, (or stoats, I think it is in this country, it's not weasels, I think it's stoats.) but they came across this path, and he was afraid to cross, you know. And he says there were about two dozen of them, and they were carrying this dead one. And I heard tell of another man one day, he was cutting, he was in a big alt, you know, where there's a river and he was cutting rods, you know for thatching purposes, you know, scollops, they call them. And he was there, and this stoat went by at an enormous rate, and this was early in the day. So he went home and he got his tea and some time after, maybe half an hour after, he came back, he was still cutting these rods down this alt and he found the squealing,

and this coming along and he met these whole crowd of stoats carrying (he got out of the way in fact, he says, there must have been about thirty of them in it). And they were carrying the dead one between them. Did you never hear that?

LS No, I never heard tell of that

Mrs McG I never heard it

T McG Did you never hear it? Well, that's true, like, for these fellows told me, like, they seen it, whether they were going to eat it, or bury it, or what they were going to do with it. But I would love to be there with a camera. That would be the proof of it.

LS Aye

T McG But this young fellow, definitely, he's in the pottery beside me, and he definitely said they were carrying the dead one, you know, about ten or twelve of them.

LS No, I never heard tell of that, but I've heard that the spit is...

T McG Aye, the spit... yeah. I heard tell of a man was out mowing one day with a scythe in a field, you see, and he came on this stoat's nest, and there was young ones in it. And he sort of ruffled it up, you know, and older ones come back, and he'd a can for drinking, you know, out of. And he seen them coming to the can, and spitting into the can, so he said he wouldn't touch it anyway. But he went back afterwards and he fixed up the nest a wee bit. And he seen two of the old stoats coming and tipping over the can.

### Co Londonderry/Derry

**James Hunter** presented the Ulster Folk Museum with a manuscript of several stories he collected in the mid twentieth century in the region of Myroe, near Limavady. This manuscript is preserved in the museum archive as V-18-1, and transcribed by Ashley Hess of the Folklore Program, Dept of English, University of Houston, Texas. It includes the following variant of a very widespread tale, which sometimes features a cloven hoof rather than a club foot.

Many years ago, there was a dance held in a hall outside Derry. Towards the end of the dance, a handsome young man asked a girl for a dance. When they were dancing, the girl dropped her handkerchief, and as she stooped down to pick it up, she discovered to her horror that her partner had a club foot. She screamed and fainted and had to be taken out of the dance hall. When she recovered she told of her experience, but by that time the handsome young man, alas the devil, had vanished.

### Co Tyrone.

This story is one of very many told by **Frank McKenna**. Frank explains how he learned these tales, most of which he heard from his grandfather when he went with him to look after the cattle:

He would have told them to me in particular when he would be up in the mountains, herding the cows. He was too old to work on the farm, so the cattle were up on the mountain that was unfenced, and we had a share of it, and they were just wandering all over the place, so you had to keep an eye on them. So that was the job he was able to do at that time. But then at night when there would be people in, there would be more than him would be telling stories.

(UFTM R84.148, recorded in Drumquim Co Tyrone, on 26 September 1984 from Frank McKenna by Linda Ballard.)

Once upon a time, all stories start like that, there was a king and he had a wife and three sons. The wife was a very delicate little woman. As a matter of fact my grandfather said, 'She was like a household plant.' And if she was, like the plant if it was exposed to the weather, it would die. But anyhow, she took ill and she died, very young. Before she died, she called her husband to her bedside and she says, 'Now, you are a very young man, so I see no reason why you shouldn't marry again.' But of course, like all husbands, he said, 'No.' He would never marry now.

Time passed, and he met a woman and he did marry her. But before he married her he decided that he wouldn't tell her that he was married before and he'd send his three sons across the water to get educated and reared. In those days, it was the custom when you got married that the wife went into her husband's house and remained there for twenty eight days, to cut her off with the habit of going to her parents' home, so she'd make her husband's her new home, or proper home. So during the time she was spending the twenty eight days, she was walking down the garden and she passed the house, the hen wife's house. There was a woman in charge of the hens, and there was somebody else in charge of the horses, somebody else in charge of the cattle and so. But she was passing the hen wife's house and it was a wet day, and she slipped and fell. And the old woman who was leaning over the half door says, more or less under her breath, 'The devil break your neck.' And the queen heard her, so she got up and she reprimanded her, and of course, the old woman was very disappointed that she was heard. 'Well,' she says, 'the woman that was here before you was a very nice woman and she always gave me food off her own table,' and she says, 'since you came here since you were married, you never gave us anything.'

'Oh,' she says, 'was he married before?'

'Yes, he was, and he had three lovely sons as well.'

'And where are they?'

'Oh, they're overseas and they're getting educated.'

So, as soon as she heard that, jealousy. And as somebody said, 'When jealousy comes into the front door, the devil come in at the back door.' So she said to herself, 'I must get rid of these boys.' So she met her husband that night and she says, 'You never told me you were married before.'

'Ah,' he says, 'I didn't want to bother you about it.'

And, she says, 'You have three sons.'

And she persisted that she would take them home, but the husband wouldn't agree.

Next day, she was walking down the garden and of course, she got talking to the old woman, and that pleased the old woman, of course, that she was talking to her and not talking to the rest. And she told her how unsuccessful she was getting the father to bring the children home. 'Well,' she says, 'I'll put you in a plan. Go to bed and pretend you're very ill, and I'll kill a wee chicken and I'll collect his blood in a cup and you put the cup under your pillow.' And she says, 'Whenever your husband is not looking, take a sip of the blood and spit it out on the floor, and say, " There's my heart's blood. The only thing'll save me is the three boys coming home."'

So of course, the king loved his wife, and he sent for the boys and took them home. And when they arrived home, she treated them royally, entertained them as best she could. This night, they had a game of cards after their meal and she says, 'Whoever wins this game will tell the other what to do.' So she won the first game and she turned round to the eldest son and says to him, 'Now, you will have to go and steal the Steed of Bells.' Now the Steed of Bells was a very valuable horse who was owned by the Knight of the Glen, and he had a cover over him when he was in the stable, and to it were attached a number of bells, and as my grandfather told me, every time the horse moved, these could be heard ringing over the three kingdoms of Ireland, England and Scotland.

The second game was played and the same results, and she said to the second boy, 'Now you will have to go along with your brother to steal the Steed of Bells.' Well now, this was an impossible job, because the Steed of Bells was the same to them as a Rolls Royce is to us today, and it was guarded night and day. When it came to the third son to play the game of cards, he says, 'We'll use my pack this time.' So he used his pack, and he won his game. 'Now,' he says, 'I've won this game, and I am going with my two brothers to steal the Steed of Bells, but you are going to be left behind, on the tower of the palace, and you are going to be tied to a chair. On one side of you will be placed a pail of water and on the other side of you, a dish of oats. And all you are getting to eat until we come back again is what the wind will blow into your mouth.' And of course, if they didn't come back, she would die of hunger.

The three boys headed off, well fitted with victuals etc., and as they were going along the road, they overtook a beggar. So, they were very kind hearted boys, so they got off their horses and shared their food with the beggar man, and so on like this, and they got into conversation and the beggar man says, 'Where are you going?' 'Oh,' he says, 'we are going to steal the Steed of Bells.' He says, 'You are very foolish, this is an impossible task,' he says, 'I'll tell you this. I am the Black Thief of Sloan. I have been a thief all my life, that's my profession, but,' he says, 'I was never manly enough to attempt stealing the Steed of Bells, but seeing you were so good to me, I'll go along with you and I'll give you the benefit of my experience.'

So they continued on their journey, and eventually they come to the Knight of the Glen's residence and they camped outside, you know, just to have a kind of a reconnoitre of the situation, and here didn't the guards gather round them, and capture the four of them, and they were thrown into a dungeon in the bottom of the tower, of the castle, or wherever the boy lived. Anyway, the following morning, they were taken up to the square in front of the castle, and in the square was a cauldron full of oil, and the fire under the cauldron, boiling it. And he called first for the old man and he says, 'You would be helping in this,' but he says, 'you are an old man now, not much odds about you,' he says, 'you just stand back.' He called the eldest son, and he says to him, 'Get into that tank there, this is the end of you, for trying to steal my horse.' The old man says, 'Wait a minute,' he says, 'I was as near death,' he says, 'as that boy is.' 'Well,' he says, 'if you can tell me a story that you were as near death as him, I'll let you off.'

(So I won't tell you that story right now, I'll pass on.) So he told the story and the Knight of the Glen accepted the story. He says, 'It's not a bad story at all. We'll accept it.' He sent for the second boy. 'Stoke up that fire,' he says, and get the oil boiling there again.' And the old man spoke again, he says, 'I have been as near death,' he says, 'as that man is.' So he told another story, and saved boy number two.

So when the youngest boy came up to be thrown into the cauldron of oil, the old man came forward again. 'Well,' he says, 'unless you tell a good story,' he said, 'this boy is the most important, being the youngest, he is going to be executed.'

So he started off and he told this story. He says, 'Once upon a time,' he says, 'as I told you before, was a thief by trade, and I was walking along the road and keeping an eye open for business. And I was passing by a house and I heard a woman crying, and I knew by the way she was crying that she was in serious trouble. So I went up to the house and made enquiries what was wrong, and she was sitting nursing a child. She says, "The owner of this house is a giant, and he went out today and he caught this child and he brought it in, and he told me to cook it for his dinner, and he has left me here and he's away out to hunt, and" she says, "if I don't have the child for his dinner, he'll kill me. So that is the position. " So I said to the woman, says I, "Just cool down, now, and take things quiet, we'll have to find a way out of this." I says, "What we'll do, I'll take the child, and I will give it to a woman down the road that I know, and she will take care of it, and I'll go out into the forest and I'll catch a young pig, and I'll take it home. We'll dress it up and we will cook it for him."  
"Oh," she says, "dear, that would be no good at all, he has a very sharp taste and smell."  
"Well," I says, "what we will do, we'll cut off the child's wee finger," and I says, "if he starts complaining about the meal when you've it cooked for him, you stir it up and show him the wee finger."

So we headed out and we caught the wee pig, and I left the child with this other woman, and we took the pig in and we cut off its feet, and threw them away, and dressed the pig and cooked it. And just as we were having things about ready, didn't the giant come walking up the lane to the house. It was one of those houses, there was no back door, only a front door and a kitchen and a roof. I says, "I am caught," I says, "I'll not to be fit to get out." She says, "Go down to the room, take off your clothes and lie down on your mouth and nose because there is a number of dead people lying down there, that he has killed for his food." So there was no outlet for me, and I had no alternative, so I run down to the room and lay down, just stripped my clothes all off me and lay down on my mouth and nose between the dead people. So the giant came in, "Hmmm hmmm," he says, "I smell the smell of a living man."

"Ach," she says, "that's nonsense, that's the child you smell."

"Oh well, maybe," he says, "it is. Might be."

So he sat down at the table, and she emptied the contents of the pot, the stew, into a dish and he slapped the whole ting into him.

"Oh," he says, "that tastes like swine." he says.

"Ah, nonsense, you and your swine," she says, "that's the child you gave me to cook."

And she stirred it up and showed him the wee finger.

"Ah," he says, "I thought it tasted like swine."

So he ate it anyway. And whenever he had finished it and he had scrubbed the bottom of the dish with a slice of bread and ate the whole lot, he says, "That gave me an appetite." So he headed down to the room, to see could he get a piece of beef till finish his dinner. So he went along to this corpse here and he gave it a kick and it didn't satisfy him, and he poked another one, and damn whenever he came along the length of me, he gave me a push, and I was a kind of lose and soft and. He says, "God," he says, "that's as fresh as the day I killed it." he says. And he bent down with his knife, and he just cut off my hip like that. And I daren't move, I was there stuck, I daren't move. And he took it up, and he roasted it in the fire, and he sat down and ate it. And he stretched himself out beside the fire, and then he fell asleep. So the woman came down to me and she says, "You can go now, he's sleeping."

So I wasn't feeling in the best of form, with no hip and the blood hanging, to run out of me, so the woman dressed my wound, and got me up. And as I was going out of the house I seen the old brute lying beside the fire, and I lifted the poker off the fire, and I stuck it intil his eye, like that. He had just one eye in the middle of his head. So he gave a jump up and he headed after me, and of course, he couldn't see me so he was following me by the sound of my feet. So after a while I found out the reason he was fit to follow me was because of the rattle of my shoes, so I pulled off my shoes and ran down the road in my bare feet. So the giant put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and he pulled out an enchanted ring, and he sent it down the road after me, and the ring overtook me and stuck itself on to my big toe. And then the giant says, "Where are you now, wee ring?"

"I am on his big toe."

So I seen that the giant was gaining on me, and I sat down on the roadside and I cut off my big toe and threw it into the river, or into the lake. The giant shouts again,

"Where are you now, wee ring?"

"I am on his big toe."

And the giant followed the sound and dived into the lake and was drowned, and I was safe.'

'Well,' says the Knight of the Glen, he says, 'that's a good story, I'll accept it.' There was a woman standing by, an old maid in the house, and she said, 'Excuse me,' she says, 'I want to say something.'

'Aye, alright,' he says, 'what are you going to say?'

She says, 'That story that you have heard is the truth because,' she says, 'I'm the woman,' she says, 'that the child was taken to. And that man, if you look at him, you'll see that one of his shoes is bent in, for there is no big toe, it has fallen in. And if you turn him round, you will see that he has only one hip by the way his trousers is hanging in. And now, 'she says, 'show me your left hand,' she says, 'you have no wee finger.'

He says, 'I never had a wee finger.'" Oh indeed,' she says, 'you had, it was your wee finger was cut off, and it was that man there saved your life.'

So he turned round to the man and he says, 'I am ever so obliged to you for doing that.' He says, 'You're to stay in my house for the rest of your life, and share in whatever we have here.' And he turned round to the boys and he said, 'The three of yous are free now.' So they were preparing to go off. 'No,' he says, 'you're not going off, you're staying the night.' And a great night of dancing and everything else. So the following morning, the boys prepared to go away and he came out. He says, 'Just one minute,' he says, 'before yous go.' And he led out the Steed of Bells, he says, 'There's a present for you,' he says, 'yous come to steal it, and now yous are getting it, without stealing it.'

So the boys headed off home with the Steed of Bells with them, and with the horse's movement couldn't the queen sitting up on the tower hear the bells ringing, and when she heard the bells ringing, she knew the boys had succeeded. And she was that mad, she started to move herself about and edge the chair over, and she threw herself off the tower. Killed herself. So, of course, the news was brought to the king, and he was all upset and excited, he's lost his wife and didn't know how it happened. And he got her in, carried her into the house and there was a proper wake and everything was going to plan. And with that, the three sons, three princes, came up the avenue to the castle, and he ran out to meet them, to tell them the news that had happened, and whenever they told him their story, it softened his pain of loss. So the funeral went on and she was buried with all the royal trimmings, and the boys was home, they had the Steed of Bells, they had their three lives and of course, they lived happy ever after.

**Con O'Neill** of Tromogue, near Pomeroy, also had an extensive story repertoire, mostly of legends relating to his district.

(UFTM C6.23, recorded from Con O'Neill by Linda Smith in Pomeroy, 23 June 1976.)

Tom Eccles really was a gentleman's son that was pretty well reared, and in those times what caused Tom Eccles, he later in life became a repacee, or in other words was locally known as a gangster type, but he had a few other comrades that he made it up with and as his lands was taken off him, well, Tom had to abscond, and he settled down nor'west of Pomeroy here, in the townland of Cappaghna Kearney. He had one of his hideouts. So Tom really travelled by horse in those days and as there weren't so many police or peelers, it was the soldiers would follow Tom and his gang. So, they were known as Redcoats in those days, and Tom had to travel, when he would do a robbery, pretty fast. But the way he had of escaping them, the blacksmith shod his horse the wrong way. That was, they put the shoe right around in the opposite way, and when they would go to trace him out, his tracks was going in, and when they would go to trace him in, his tracks was going out.

But he was a very helpful man to the poor, and there was one occasion about Tom Eccles which has been recorded. There was an old woman, and for the failure of rent, she had one little boy, and she failed to pay her rent and in those days, well, the landlord if you didn't get the rent, he actually evicted you. The County Pound was very close to the town here, and Tom had been visiting the village, which hadn't been too big at that time, he met this woman in distress on the road, and she had this little boy, and her crying, and the child was also crying, in its bare feet. And he says, 'What is the matter with you, you're crying?'

She says, 'The only belongings I had,' she says, 'was seized this morning,' she says, 'by the grippers and taken to the County Pound, and the cow lies there for a ransom, and there's three pound to be paid against her.'

Tom says, 'Aw, that's alright,' he says, 'that's too bad.' He says, 'Was she useful, the cow?'

She says, 'She was. She gave me milk and fed the boy here, and that's all we have.' We've no food.'

'Aw well,' he says, 'who is your landlord?'

And she told him. 'Oh,' he says, 'I know. Well,' he says, 'I would you go down to the bailiff, or gripper,' he says, 'and give him the three pounds,' he says, 'till him,' he says, 'and tell him to come up and release your cow.'

So the woman was all delighted, and asked who he was. 'Well,' he says, 'it's a friend,' he says, 'I'll not tell you my name.' And he was a man of six foot two. And the woman, as soston as she could get down there, she says, 'I've only a certain limited time to get her released, and if I haven't her released before four o'clock, I'm had.' So she rushed on down till the landlord's, which was down below the town, and the landlord come along, or sent his bailiff along, and she says, 'I'll pay you when you come up till the Pound Gate.' So she gave him the money, and he released the cow, and the woman and the boy turned her up, which is known the Top Road, to drive her that way. And when they had their transaction over, they headed down towards the village here, and this gentleman stepped out, and he says, 'I want that money,' he says, 'you have there.' And he held them up, and took the money, and got the cow released for the woman. And got his money. Got his money back.

## Rathlin Island

**Thomas Cecil's** very extensive repertoire includes stories on all aspects of life on Rathlin Island, learned especially from his uncle and from his father. This is one of his many tales of the fairies, and it deals with a well known theme, of abduction. Fairies are often said to live near or under thorn trees, and it is considered very unlucky to interfere in any way with such a tree. However, this story is unusual as it is a blackberry thorn that protects the abducted child. Frequently, people taken to fairyland may find an opportunity to escape providing they have not eaten fairy food.

(UFTM C79.29, recorded at Church Bay, Lower End, Rathlin Island, from Thomas Cecil by Linda Smith, 16 July 1979.)

There was this small boy on the island. He disappeared from home and they didn't know where he had got to, they put it down that he had fallen over one of the cliffs, or he fell down a well or fell into one of the lakes. And they searched the island for two or three days, and they couldn't find him. Searched everywhere, high and low, streams and wells and bogs, everywhere, and there wasn't a trace of him to be got and you know, the parents were naturally very upset. And on the third morning they were in a pretty bad way and they'd put him down as being dead and he turned up at the door, spic and span, he was as clean as a anew pin, and they asked him where he was. And he said he went over the mountain for a walk, and in this particular place there's a wee valley in it, and he said he seen a lot of small children playing, and he went down to them, and they took him in through (told them the place) took him in through the hill, and it wasn't children at all, but it was fairies, you see. So they took him into the hill anyway and they wanted him to stay, so they scrubbed him and they cleaned him. To get him to stay, they had to take every earthly sign off him, everything off him, any earthly thing he had on him they had to take off him. Only after they had done that they could keep him, you see. He would never get back to his own people again. He would be one of them. So they scrubbed him, and they cleaned him, and they washed him and they done everything. Took his own clothes off him and they give him other clothes and still he wanted to go back home, and they finished up, they couldn't keep him. By the third day, you see, they must let you go. So they had to let him go by the morning of the third day.

The wee boy was away gathering blackberries, you see, this is what he was doing when he disappeared. And he arrived back home and he was telling them all this in the house, and they were giving him something to eat and all, and he says, 'Mammy,' he says, 'my hand is very sore,' he says, 'when I was gathering the blackberries,' he said 'I got a jag under my finger nail.' And he showed it to her and she says, 'Well, the Lord be praised,' she says, 'that you got that under your finger nail,' she says, 'for only that,' she says, 'the fairies would have been able to keep you.' And this was the only thing they couldn't remove.'

**Jim McFaul** of the Upper End of the island also learned a number of stories an traditions passed down through his family. This is his version of a well known tale, which is also part of the repertoire of Thomas Cecil.

(UFTM R83.115, recorded from Jim McFaul during a visit he made to the museum on 3 October 1983, by Linda Ballard and Clifford Harkness.)

They always believe there were witches on Isla, that's a Scottish island, and there was a sailing boat went from Rathlin to Isla, which was quite a common thing to do. When they were there, they couldn't get enough wind to sail the boat back the weather went very calm, you see, and I suppose maybe they hadn't much way of living on Isla, they hadn't much money or anything, and they were very anxious to get home. And somebody told them about this certain witch, if they went to her, she had power over the elements. And they went to her, and she, I don't know what she did, but anyway she told them to go down to the harbour and she said, 'You'll get enough wind to sail you out of the harbour.' But she gave them this piece of wool, woollen yarn, she tied three knots on it. And they were to loose one knot, or something, when they got on the boat, and it would give them enough wind, a breeze or something to take them out of the harbour. And whenever they got out, she said, 'If you feel you haven't enough wind, you can loose the second knot, and you'll have as much wind as you'll want, but don't on any account touch the third knot.' They did as she said, and fair enough they did, apparently, the wind had started to freshen, and they opened the second knot when they went out, and made very good speed the whole way to within a mile off the other side of the island. And there was some young fellow, and he didn't really believe in this, he thought it was just coincidence, and he decided he was going to loose the third knot, and it came in that bad a gale that it blew them away past the island, and away down to Murlough, and in fact they were lucky to get away with their lives. They survived it alright, but they were two weeks before they could get back to the island, from Murlough. They were right beside it but hey couldn't get back..