



TILLEY TALES

NA SGEULACHDAN | THE STORIES

Uamh an Òir | The Cave of Gold

As told by Rev. William Matheson on Tobar an Dualchais

There are many caves locally named as Uamh an Òir, or the Cave of Gold, in the Highlands and, as Rev. William Matheson tells, every region claims the story of the cave as their own:

"Uamh an Òir is represented in every area of the Highlands... Nobody can say for sure where this cave is but each area claims it is in their own neck of the woods.

You know the story? That the piper went down into the cave playing the pipes, with his dog. And they were hearing him playing at it was green fairy dogs, a' ghall-uaine, it was the fairy dogs he was up against and his own dog tried to protect him. And the piper never appeared again but the dog did – the dog came out without a tuft of fur left on him!"

This means the dog was left with no fur after fighting the beast inside the cave – an cù bochd | the poor dog!

An Greusaiche Buidhe | The Yellow Cobbler

A summary of the story told by Rev. Norman McDonald on Tobar an Dualchais

Once upon a time there was a man which they called an Greusaiche Buidhe (the Yellow Cobbler) who lived in the area of Glenelg. Coming up to Christmas one year, he decided he would head off to a place on the other side of the hill from Glenelg to get a present.

Anyway, in any case, as he was climbing that big hill which they still call Cnoc an Iolaire, Eagle's Hill, he heard the most beautiful and melodic sound he had ever heard, going past a fairy knoll at the top of the hill. And although he was in a hurry, he stood. And the longer he stood, the more he was taken in by the music. The music was so pleasant that an Greusaiche Buidhe said to himself:

"Och, I'll go along and listen for a little while."



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And he went along, and he was hearing the music and the music was so enticing that he went in, and what a sight met him! He had never seen such a sight, oir such a beautiful palace. He reckoned this place was not of this world. There was a huge hall full of the most elegant fairies dressed in the most splendid outfits.

And there was a band of musicians there, playing instruments he saw and heard with his eyes and ears, but had never seen or heard ever before. He then saw them dancing a reel, and most of the fairies taking part in this dance. And the music and the sight was having such an effect on him that an **Greusaiche Buidhe** jumped straight in amongst the fairies in the reel.

He was there a long time but he did not realise this. That night, **bean a' Ghreusaiche** (the cobbler's wife) was back in Glenelg waiting on him and, at the time that he was expected home, she looked outside. There was no sign of him. So she sat and sat, and morning came and her husband had still not returned home. The next day came and he hadn't come home. And the third day came and an **Greusaiche Buidhe** still hadn't come home.

His wife was left there sorrowful, and spent time mourning him. And finally, didn't the anniversary come around, the very night to the year an **Greusaiche Buidhe** had disappeared. And the old woman said to herself:

"Well indeed, there is no use in me grieving those who have left and do not seem to be coming back. I'd better go and get a wee something myself to pass Christmas time."

She climbed the hill, and finally reached the top. And when she was going past the fairy knoll, what did she hear but the most joyful music she had ever heard in her life! She had never heard such music, and she stood listening. And the music had such an effect that she walked along towards the fairy knoll; she knew that was where it was coming from. Finally, she entered.

She saw the group of fairies dancing on the floor to this music, and who did she find in their company? Her own husband! An **Greusaiche Buidhe**, as light on his feet as any of them, dancing this reel. She went over to him and put her hand under his arm and he stood, and he could hardly believe his eyes – his own wife!



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An Greusaiche Buidhe

"Oh for goodness' sake," she said, "come out of this reel!"

"Och, woman," he said, "won't you leave me be? One more minute? I've only been here ten minutes!"

"Ten minutes?"

A whole year had past since an Greusaiche Buidhe had disappeared, but the time had passed so quickly for him with this otherworldly music and with the extraordinary sight, that he had only felt it ten minutes! But the old woman managed to pull him out of there, and they went home together, and you bet the people of the glen had a wonderful Christmas that year.

That's how I heard the story and mas breug bhuam i is breug thugam i (if it's a lie I tell, it's a lie I was told).