



# LANDSCAPE AND THE HUMAN PSYCHE

INSPIRATION FROM GEOLOGY

A TOUR OF LANDSCAPES THAT HAVE INSPIRED MYTHS, LEGENDS AND MUSIC





Blood-red water swirls around the rocks as it flows over small waterfalls. The legends suggest that a mushroom shaped rock at the base of the Devils Steps is where the Satan addressed his followers.....others believe the rock was used by witches for executions, or that the glen was used as a secret meeting place for druids.

Enchanting or other-wordly, the glen formed through the erosive action of the Carnock Burn, carving its way through the Old Red Sandstone. Ferric iron oxide haematite give the rocks their colour, and the water reflects this, as well as containing tannin from decomposing plants.....so thankfully no blood was spilt in the taking of these photos!





The story goes that the Irish giant Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn MacCool) was challenged to a fight by the Scottish giant Benandonner. Fionn accepted the challenge and built the causeway across the Straits of Moyle so that the two giants could meet. Fionn hides from Benandonner when he realises that his foe is much bigger than he is. Fionn's wife disguises Fionn as a baby. When Benandonner sees the size of the 'baby', he reckons that its father must be a giant among giants. He flees back to Scotland in fright, destroying the causeway behind him so that Fionn would be unable to chase him down.

In reality, 60 million years ago, plate tectonic movement created a lava field, with hundreds of flow spanning from what is now Northern Ireland to Staffa – an island off the western coast of Scotland. As this giant flow cooled and solidified, it formed a series of basaltic hexagonal pillars – in Northern Ireland the 40,000 interlocking columns are known as the Giants Causeway, while Staffa is famous for Fingals Cave – both names harking back to the legend of two warring giants.

Fingals Cave also inspired Mendelssohn, Jules Verne, Turner, William Wordsworth and John Keats amongst others...truly an inspiring landscape.





A beautiful and mysterious landscape, inspiring numerous myths and legends from fairies to dragons, hidden pots of gold and the valley of echoes. Invisible from the bottom, hidden by pillars of rock, The Table is a flat plateau that has moved away from the main summit, said to be the meeting place of the fairy folk on a summers evening under a full moon. It is also said that locals used to hide their cattle from Viking raiders on the Table.



The Quiraing was formed by a 543m high landslide that today extends almost 2km northwest and is still moving at 2 – 3 cm per year. 60 million years ago tectonic plate movement caused huge tears in the Earth's surface, releasing molten lava across this landscape. 24 different lava flows created a volcanic mass 300m thick. Over time, the weight of this lying over softer rocks caused the volcanic rocks to start moving – a process that is still ongoing today.





Across Ullswater looms Souther Fell with its spectral army. On Midsummer's Day in 1745, 26 "sober and respected" people testified to seeing a line of soliders and carriages marching along the summit ridge.....no forces were in the area.

The only explanation offered was that a strange atmospheric effect caused a mirage or reflection of Bonnie Prince Charlie's army who had been exercising on the Scottish Coast.





Loch Coruisk, Skye.....legend has it that this is the home of the Kelpies – shape-shifting horse-like water spirits with the strength of a 100 horses. Immortalised by Robert Burns....

“...When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord  
An’ float the jinglin’ icy boord  
Then, water-kelpies haunt the foord  
By your direction  
And ‘nighted trav’llers are allur’d  
To their destruction...”





Myths are not only historical.....Here at The Hermitage, in a man-made environment, the stump of a tree which fell during a storm in December 2011 has become known as a place for wishing. Pennies are hammered into the wooden remains in exchange for good health.





Arthurs Seat....

The body of a sleeping dragon who never got up?

The site of Camelot?

Ard-na-said – named after the height of arrows?

Apparently washing your face in the dew of May Day  
will keep you youthful and beautiful!

Or a Carboniferous volcanic plug , sculpted by ice  
flowing from west to east

*“On May-day, in a fairy ring,  
We’ve seen them round St Anthon’s spring,  
Frae grass the cauler dew draps wring  
To weet their een,  
And water clear as crystal spring  
To synd them clean”*

Robert Fergusson







At Luskentyre Beach an over-sized hound is said to walk the beach leaving a series of large paw prints in the damp sand which disappear halfway across – a faerie hound or Cu Sith.

A legend tells that the stone circle of Callanish was discovered by a farmer. With the intention of removing the stone, the farmer began to dig for its base. As he dug deeper into the earth, other stones began to appear until finally he had brought to light the ancient ring of Callanish.

It is generally believed that Callanish functioned as an astronomical calendar associated with the moon and that it accurately marked the 18.61 year cycle of maximum lunar declination. The gneiss rock of which the ring is constructed is thickly embedded with a variety of crystal types including white quartz, feldspar and hornblende.





With its singing sands and giants marbles, Eigg's geology is a walk through eons of time.



Some of the concretions found at Laig Bay are over 2m across, and are estimated to have taken about 5 million years to reach this size. Calcite migrating in the sand after burial form these harder boulders that remain following erosion of the softer surrounding rock.





The Storr is a craggy hill created by a landslide that occurred many, many years ago. One of the enduring stories relating to the Old Man of Storr is that it was the thumb of a giant who when he died became buried in the earth. Another tale tells of a man who walked up the hill every evening with his small wife until one she had grown too old and could no longer climb to the top to join him. The fairy folk who had watched them go up every evening, offered the old man the chance to always have his wife with him wherever he went. The old man accepted the offer but the fairy folk tricked them and turned them both into pillars of rock, ensuring that they would indeed always be together.