

The Giant's Causeway



IN IRISH MYTHOLOGY, Fionn mac Cumhail stands above all others. Perhaps this is not surprising as he was a giant who measured over fifty feet in height. In English, Fionn is known as Finn McCool – a very up-to-date name that unintentionally reflects his status in Irish folklore. In some versions of his story, he is not a giant but a hero with supernatural powers. In others, dating back to the third century, he is the leader of a group of warriors called the Fianna.

Legend has it that Fionn lived happily on the Antrim coast with his wife, Oonagh. One day, Fionn discovered that there was a rival giant living on the west coast of Scotland. Giants, by nature, are not friendly creatures. They do not trust strangers and are easily provoked. The appearance of another giant must have been seen as a threat by Fionn.

The Scottish giant, Benandonner, probably felt very much the same and it was not long before the two giants came to blows. It began, as fights so often do, with verbal insults. Fionn was frequently abused from across the sea by Benandonner, safe across the water.

Finally, Fionn could stand it no more. He clawed a huge lump of earth from the ground and hurled it with tremendous force across the sea in the direction of Benandonner. Was Benandonner worried by this? Not in the slightest. Why not? Despite all of the anger that Fionn put into his throw, the missile fell far short and landed in the Irish Sea, forming the Isle of Man. The hole that was made by Fionn digging out the earth filled up with rain water and became Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland.

All of this amused Benandonner no end and he laughed like a hyena, knowing that Fionn couldn't reach him. This was too much for Fionn who challenged Benandonner to a proper fight: man to man; face to face. Of course, Benandonner agreed. After all, a giant likes nothing better than a fight.