

# NEWSLETTER

Tel: 096 31809

[www.northmayogenealogy.com](http://www.northmayogenealogy.com)

Email: [nmhmanager@gmail.com](mailto:nmhmanager@gmail.com)

Email: [northmayo@gmail.com](mailto:northmayo@gmail.com)

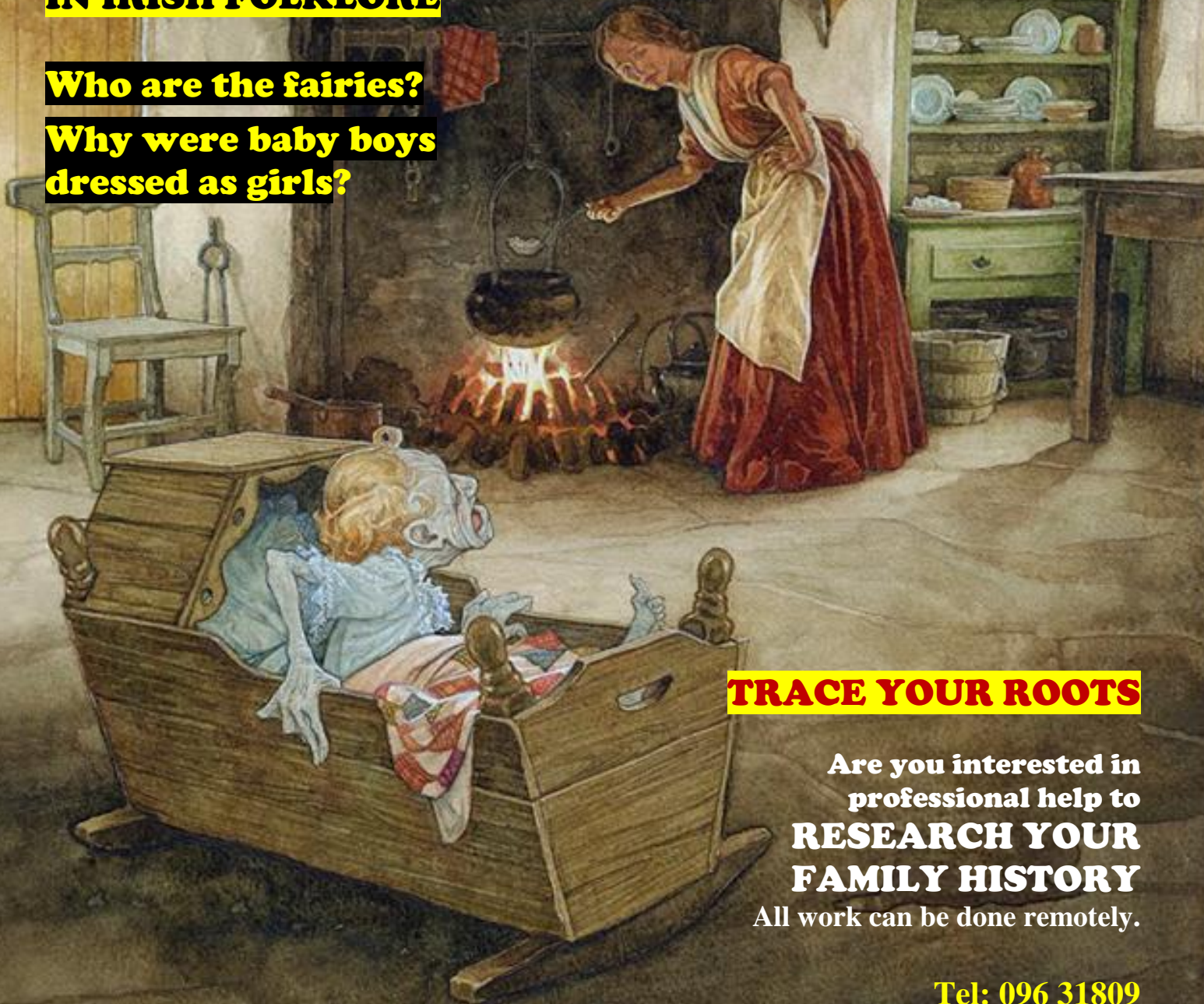
Check out our



## THE FAIRIES IN IRISH FOLKLORE

**Who are the fairies?**

**Why were baby boys  
dressed as girls?**



## TRACE YOUR ROOTS

Are you interested in  
professional help to  
**RESEARCH YOUR  
FAMILY HISTORY**  
All work can be done remotely.

**Tel: 096 31809**

**Email: [northmayo@gmail.com](mailto:northmayo@gmail.com)**

**or visit our website**

Illustration of a changeling - from [irishpost.com](http://irishpost.com)

## THE FAIRIES IN IRISH FOLKLORE



Before the arrival of Christianity in Ireland the people worshipped various gods, mostly associated with nature. These Pagan gods receded into legend and fairy tale, retaining magical powers in the imagination of the people.

Fairies or little people were said to have the power to enchant and outwit human kind and were seen to be as swift to bless and quick to anger thus symbolising the combination of good and evil. They could bring both fortune and misfortune and were therefore respected and placated.

The 'fairy fort', rath or liss is thought to be the home of the fairies. There are thousands of fairy forts around Ireland today and they remain intact due to the superstition that you do not touch the homes of the fairies as they were known to hold great grudges against families who did. These enclosures are actually ringforts, circular enclosures surrounded by an earthen or stone bank, and designed to protect cattle from raiders. As time passed people moved out into more open forms of habitation and it is said the fairies then moved in making these 'ring forts' their new homes thus to be known as 'fairy forts'.

Superstitions regarding the fairy forts gave rise to the telling of many stories, including the following recounted by a pupil in Roscommon and detailed in the Schools' Folklore Collection.

*"There are two fairy forts situated in my district. One fairy fort is of circular shape and is surrounded by trees. Fairies are supposed to abide in it and are said to appear after twelve o'clock a.m.*

*In front of this fort a house was situated but now the owner of the house and of the land in which the fort is situated is dead and the house has collapsed.*

*Nobody ever dreams of tilling the land in which the forts are, neither do they cut the trees as it is said that anybody who touches those trees is sure to be unlucky."*<sup>1</sup>

Long ago, in parts of Ireland, boys wore dresses to protect them from fairies. People believed that fairies would only abduct a male child. As a result, boys were disguised as girls by wearing dresses to confuse the fairies.

The belief was that a child taken by fairies was then replaced by a sickly fairy child known as a "changeling". In reality the child may have become ill and have changed in appearance or demeanour but fairy work was still suspected.

Fairies were also known to take the form of hares, as recounted in the story from the Schools' Folklore Collection.

*"A man who went hunting one day shot a hare which he took home and skinned and put into the pot to boil.*

*When he lifted the lid to take out the boiled hare, a little woman jumped out and took her place at the table to eat with the man. He ran in terror to a neighbour's house and when the neighbours returned with him they saw the hare running from the house.*

*The next day he got a severe headache and his head split in two and he died."*

The long custom of continuous and careful fairy appeasement may be one of the reasons that Ireland has so many well preserved archaeological remains.

They have become a significant part of Ireland's heritage and are protected by law. They are mapped and listed as part of the archaeological record and provide insights into the history and dwellings of the past. It is said that the fairies are the greatest protectors of Irish archaeology as farmers dare not disturb the fairy forts!

Resources:

<sup>1</sup> *Duchás.ie, RTE.ie, Irishfolktours.com, Emeraldisle.ie*

### BOOK OF THE WEEK IRISH GHOST TALES

By Tony Locke R.I.P.

€13 (+postage)

Discover the darker side of Ireland with this collection of spine-chilling tales from across the country.

Available to purchase from Reception or online from the North Mayo Heritage Centre ebay bookstore

Signed by author



## AWAY WITH THE FAIRIES

What does it mean?

To behave in a strange way that seems to be out of touch with reality.

### A brief history of SHEEAN

(*Síodhán*, a fairy hill).

Located in the east of the parish of Kilcommon, 15 miles south-east of Belmullet.

The property of W. H. Carter, Esq. Contain 2,096 acres, 2 roods, 6 perches\*, of which only 10 acres are cultivated, 11 acres, 2 roods, 5 perches\* are under water, and the remainder is chiefly under deep mountain bog and boggy pasture. This is a bleak mountain district, with but one cabin in it.

\* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

Extract from Ordnance Survey Namebooks of 1838

### Brief history of the surname FARRY/FORRY

Woulfe gives Ó Farrraigh for this north Connacht name, saying that it is distinct from Fairy, of which, however, it is normally a synonym.<sup>1</sup>

Farry, Forry, Ó Fharraigh; a rare Mayo surname.<sup>2</sup>

Farry, Ferry, O'Ferry, O'Farry, Ó Fearodhaigh, 'descendants of Fearadhach' (manly); a much scattered surname, but found chiefly in East Ulster.<sup>3</sup>

Of the 5 Farry births in Ireland in 1890, including variants, 1 occurred in Leinster, 1 occurred in Munster, 1 occurred in Ulster, and 2 occurred in Connacht.

<sup>1</sup> From 'The Surnames of Ireland' by Edward MacLysaght.

<sup>2</sup> From 'Irish Names and Surnames' by Reverend Patrick Woulfe, 1993 edition

<sup>3</sup> Ibid