

The legend of Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway

Finn MacCool, Ulster warrior and commander of the King of Ireland's armies, is renowned for his amazing feats of strength. Once during a fight with a giant, he scooped up a huge clod of earth and threw it at his rival. Legend says that the clod fell into the sea and became the Isle of Man, while the depression left behind filled with water and became Lough Neagh.

Some tales say that Finn fell in love with a lady giant on the island of Staffa in the Hebrides and that he built the Giant's Causeway to bring her over to him without getting his feet wet. However, the legend below is the explanation most commonly used.

The story goes that Finn was going about his daily duties in Northern Ireland when one of his enemies, a Scottish giant named Benandonner, who lived in Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa in the Hebrides, started shouting out insults at him. He was rude to Finn and said he was weak and no good at fighting.

Benandonner eventually got so angry that he shouted to Finn. "If I could get my hands on you I would make sure you are never able to fight again." But he added, "Unfortunately I cannot swim so I am not able to get over to you and we shall never know who is the stronger of the two."

Finn was so enraged that he tore large pieces out of the nearby cliffs and rammed them down into the seabed, making a causeway between Northern Ireland and Staffa. "Now you'll have no excuse," he shouted across to Benandonner.

When Finn caught sight of Benandonner as he started to cross the causeway he realised how gigantic his Scottish rival was and thought that perhaps he had taken on more than he could manage.

So he devised a clever plan. He decided to lie down and pretend to be asleep, but before he did that he quickly made himself a large child's cot and disguised himself in baby's clothes.

When the Scottish giant arrived at Finn's house he shouted, "Where is that coward MacCool?" Then he noticed the cot and the sleeping 'baby' inside it and he suddenly felt very afraid. He thought, "My goodness, if this is the size of the baby, what size must the father be?"



Without waiting around to find out, he turned on his heels and ran like he had never run before. He raced back across to Scotland, destroying the causeway as he went, so that Finn could not come after him. And that is why only two fragments of the causeway now remain, one end on the coast of Northern Ireland and the other on the Hebridean island of Staffa.

