

Glossary of Old Gaelic Terms

Fili - The bards – ancient poets and advisors to the Kings and Chieftains. It took 20 years to commit the Kings lineage and legacy to memory. Much was in a poetic form and was passed down from one bard to another (apprentice) Much of the ancient legends and mythology was preserved in this manner until finally being recorder in the ancient books of Ireland by scholars and monks during the monastic ages.

Bean-si The banshee a female spirit who herald the death of a family member with wailing and crying. Believed to occure mostly with descendants of ancient Gaelic families.

Si or faries associated with a rath or lone tree. Farmers will not touch one of these for fear of retaliation. Major highways have had to be diverted to avoid disturbing these at huge financial expense.

The seventh son of a seventh son, - faith healers and bone setters Believed to have a special talent, sometimes using herbs and other secret receipts to facilitate “a cure”.

Tinkers - Travelers, Gypsies A nomadic group of people, known as Travelling People, who in days passed survived mending pots, pans and buckets with their tin-smith skills, hence the name “tin-ker”. They had a particular culture of their own, upholding many ancient religious traditions.

Leprachauns or Wee Folk. A race of magical people who guarded fairy treasures, and were often considered shoemakers. The had a mischievous streak, Stealing babies and replacing them with a bad-tempered changling.

Seanchai or storyteller In old Ireland, these storytellers entertained people with extensive tales of ancient myth and legend. In continued up until the last century, when they would be welcomed to spend the night to entertain the locals who would stop by . The next morning they would continue their travels to the next stop on their journey.

Shilleagh - Walking Stick. Named after Shilleagh in the Wicklow Mountains these “cudgels” were made of blackthorn – a relative of the rose. They were hard wood, polished with black and had thorn like knobs. They were suitable for striking the hedge row, on the darkest nights, as you made your way home. If attacked, they were an excellent weapon for defense.

An Seachalan - The Matchmaker. In days long past, most weddings in Ireland would never have taken place without the service of the Seachalan. Even the Seachalan had a rigid set of rules to adhere to in making the perfect match. There were the delicate questions of bloodline, social status and merit of the union. The Seachalan had all the diplomacy of a Statesman - and well he should, for this was the last decision the parents would be making for their children.