

*A TREWE HISTORIE OF  
THE FAERIES OF LIGHTWOOD  
AND DOON HILL;*

*OR,*

*HOW THE SCOTTISH FAERIES FIRST CAME TO VIRGINIA*

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For Andrew and Thomas of *The Little House in the Woods*

***“A h-uile la sona dhuibh ‘s gun la idir dona dhuibh!”***

This is a true story of folk from another realm, and of how they prevailed over great obstacles and travails. In their own world, this is a well-known and famous tale, but, in ours, it is almost unknown. Though the subjects of this story are not human, their achievements mirror, in many ways, our own.

Many facts in this tale can be successfully checked for veracity. As for others? Well, let me say that I would not recommend making too much of an effort.

For those, especially the children, who find Lightwood a magical place, I hope this tale adds to the fun and enjoyment of staying in this wonderful old home.

The Author

## *The Leaving*

In County Tyrone, in Northern Ireland, stands Crosh House. Settled in the time of King Charles I, on land obtained through royal grant, the estate was long home to the Scottish Calhoun family. The ancient house was pulled down many years ago and replaced by the present structure, but the nearby tombs of Calhouns and Hamiltons, displaying finely carved crests and coats of arms, can still be seen. And it was there, in 1732, that Archibald Hamilton, descendant of the Earl of Arran and of the mighty Robert the Bruce himself, courted his cousin, Francis Calhoun, amid the pleasant gardens and elegant rooms of Crosh House.

Our story begins with the marriage of Francis and Archibald early in 1733. It was not uncommon for first cousins to marry in the eighteenth century. The upper classes were restricted in their social connections and marrying a close relative ensured that bloodlines remained pure, by the standards of the day. But, in 1733, the younger sons of the gentry could find themselves in a difficult predicament due to the laws of primogeniture. These laws decreed that the bulk of any estate passed undivided to the eldest son, often leaving younger siblings to make their own way in the world; such was the case with Archibald Hamilton.

With limited options, yet young and newlywed, Francis and Archibald decided to leave Ireland and make their way to a new place of opportunity, Virginia, in America. By royal decree, land in the western part of that colony had recently been made available to Protestant settlers, the Ulster Scots, later called the Scots-Irish, from the north of Ireland.

Now, you must remember that in 1733 a trip across the ocean to America was a daunting prospect. Once made, a traveler did not necessarily ever expect to return. So, as there was much family business to take care of and goodbyes to be said, the newlywed couple determined to make a trip back to Scotland, the country of their ancestors, to bid farewell to family and friends who still resided there.

Soon after their wedding, Francis and Archibald left their own County Tyrone, never to return, and set sail for Glasgow. There was, then, much

commerce between that city and the American colonies, so finding a ship on which to book passage was not difficult. Arrangements were made to leave six weeks hence for Philadelphia aboard the aptly named vessel, Hope. Once there, they would be able to make their way to Virginia without too much trouble.

After a time in Glasgow, Archibald left Francis at a family residence and set out for Edinburgh, a good three days' journey away, where more family and friends resided. After a pleasant sojourn, two weeks of parties, dinners, and balls, Archibald was ready to make his way back across Scotland to the coast, where he and Francis would finally depart for the colonies. It was on this return journey that the fates of Archibald Hamilton and the faeries of Doon Hill would entwine.

Several days into his journey, Archibald made a detour to the beautiful lake and mountain scenery of the Trossachs. A favorite uncle lived there, and although that was the ostensible reason for adding several days to his journey, there was something else. There was an almost overwhelming sense that something mysterious was pulling him. He couldn't explain the feeling, but fond memories of a boyhood trip there made him more than willing to follow the beckoning. After two day's ride Archibald Hamilton stopped at a cozy inn in the small and ancient village of Aberfoyle. Aberfoyle is a lovely place, with mountains behind and river before, surrounded by a lush and leafy landscape. But more important for our story, Aberfoyle was, and still is, the home of the famous faerie lair, Doon Hill. For centuries, Doon Hill has been a magical center for all the tribes of faeries, sometimes known as the Sith, who live in that part of Scotland. Across the river from the main street, over a narrow stone bridge and down an equally narrow road, lies the path to the famous hill.

Long before there were Scottish clans of men and women, there were tribes of faeries. They once ruled the land without rival, beginning at the time of the melting of the great ice sheet thousands of years ago. Referring to themselves as *Daoine Sith* or "People of Peace," they were cunning and mischievous, but also loving and kind. They ruled with wit and wisdom, but also, when needed, with magic.

Doon Hill, or *Dun Sithichean* in Scottish Gaelic, is still a sacred place of the Trossach faeries. It is a small, but remarkable, hill, steep-sided and conical, rising from the midst of a cool and shady forest. Great billows of moss grip

the tree roots and bracken hides the forest floor. A steep path ascends and winds about the hill. As one climbs the path, the wind begins to rustle the leaves and breaks the absolute silence of the forest. Then, with a few more steps and some heavy breaths, the summit is reached. And there, situated on the level ground at the hill's top, are several gnarled trees, a great pine the foremost amongst them. The trees in themselves are not unusual and, in most places, one might not even notice them, but, on Doon Hill, these trees are remarkable indeed. For you see, these are the famous magic wishing trees of the Trossach faeries. Tied on every limb, waving in the soft breeze, are hundreds of cloth strips called *clouties*. And on every piece of cloth is written a wish. For centuries and centuries the faeries of Doon Hill have been, if the mortals who wrote them are lucky enough, granting the wishes written on these rough strips of fabric.

Things were very much the same at Doon Hill in the time of Archibald Hamilton. In 1691, the Reverend Robert Kirk, minister of the parish church in Aberfoyle, wrote a mysterious work entitled *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*. A minister and a scholar, Robert Kirk was, amongst his other accomplishments, the first to translate the scriptures into Scottish Gaelic. He was a seventh son and said to be gifted with "second sight." In the *Secret Commonwealth*, he put forth much information concerning the faeries of Scotland. Much of what he learned, he learned at Doon Hill, only a short walk from the church. During his investigations, he was known to have spent many nights with his ear to the ground listening to the faeries living in the rooms and passages below. His wife would know where to find him if he was not at home by a decent hour, and would often go out late at night to fetch him.

Only a year after writing his faerie tome, on May 14, 1692, the Reverend Kirk died on Doon Hill. It was said that the faeries, in order to stop him giving away their secrets, transported his soul to their own realm where it dwells to this day. Some say this soul resides inside the great pine, commonly known as the "Minister's Pine," which still stands at the center of the hilltop.

Although *The Secret Commonwealth* was not published until 1815, when it was rediscovered by Sir Walter Scott, and does not actually mention the hill by name, the Reverend often spoke of and preached on the subject of the faeries of Doon Hill. The fame of the place spread far and wide as a result, and many began to travel to Aberfoyle to visit the site out of curiosity, or to

gain good luck, or to ask a favor of the faeries. By 1700, the flow of people was constant and ever growing and, when Reverend Kirk's book was published in 1815, it became a torrent.

Robert Kirk included many interesting details in his book about the faerie culture. He wrote of their magical powers, their beliefs and, interestingly, mentioned that faeries always take on the language and dress of the people who live on the land above their kingdoms. So, at Doon Hill in 1733, the faeries would have sounded and looked like miniature Scots, tartans and all. One interesting, and somewhat confounding aspect of faerie speech, is the use of *echlins*--a type of word game in which a phrase is the same when read both forward or in reverse. A simple echlin would sound something like this: instead of "Is that all there is?" it would be "Is what is what is?" The best faerie *echlins* can be clever, complex, and very confusing. I mention these things not for any relative importance to our story, but simply as a matter of interest concerning faerie life.

The actions of Robert Kirk changed life for the Doon Hill faeries forever. What had once been a great faerie place, little known to the world of men and women, suddenly became a place of much interest and even of pilgrimage. Where once only local citizens had left a few wishes tied to the faerie trees, now thousands came from all over Scotland and beyond, festooning the trees with hundreds of cloth strips, each with its own poignant wish.

While a few of the faeries enjoyed this attention, most did not. Faeries are by nature a shy and reclusive folk and do not appreciate being sought out and peered at by curious mortals. As it is almost impossible to catch a glimpse of a faerie, people will go to extraordinary lengths to see one, spending night after night at their lairs, or even worse digging into their sacred hills to open up a room or passage. Also sorting through the many wishes and deciding which ones to grant added greatly to the faeries' work and left little time for the play and relaxation so important to the faerie way of life. Such was the state of affairs at Doon Hill when Archibald Hamilton decided to pay a visit to the famous faerie lair.

## *The Tree at Doon Hill*

It was only a short walk from the village, across the bridge, to the forest around the hill. As Archibald walked through the wood and approached the foot of the mound, he somehow sensed that something of great import was to happen that day--an event in which he was to play a prominent part.

As he ascended the circling path up the side of Doon Hill, Archibald was calmed by the cool breeze and rustling leaves. He began to feel some sadness at the prospect of leaving behind all that was familiar to him by traveling to a new and faraway place. Reaching the top of the hill, he stared at the many cloth strips with so many wishes written upon them, and felt in his pocket for the cloth upon which he had written his own. We do not know what it said, but we can perhaps guess that it might have had something to do with his forthcoming journey. As he tied the strip to a low-hanging bough, Archibald was startled to see an old woman tying her own wish to a branch on the opposite side of the tree. He had been so lost in his own thoughts that he hadn't noticed her.

“Good day to you, Old Mother,” said Archibald, bowing deeply.

“And a good day to you, Young Son,” said the old woman, with a friendly kindly smile. “What brings ye here to the Faerie Kingdom? Are ye just curious, or is there something more?” she said, with a twinkle in her startling blue eyes.

“I come here out of more than simple curiosity, Old Mother,” replied Archibald. “Indeed, I am on a journey of sorts. A journey of leaving and embarking into the unknown, and I must confess to being heartily a’feared. I have come to this ancient place, not only to say goodbye to the land of my ancestors, and to all those who now dwell deep in its hallowed ground, but also to request luck and good fortune for the voyage I and my family are about to undertake to America.”

“Ye be off to America, are ye?” the old woman inquired. “Well, if it’s luck ye are wishing for, then ye be at the right place,” she said, with a chuckle

and a wise knowing smile. With that, she sat down heavily on a soft mossy bank, pulled an old gnarled wooden pipe from a leather bag at her waist, and began stuffing the voluminous bowl with a deep brown colored tobacco.

“Tell me of this land to which ye be goin’ and takin’ yer family,” she inquired, lighting her pipe and taking deep puffs, as she settled in to listen to his tale.

Somewhat startled, yet oddly compelled by the old woman’s knowing presence, Archibald sat down beside her and, breathing in the sweet-smelling tobacco smoke that had begun to form a mist around them both, began to tell his tale.

His words began to tumble from Archibald in a torrent of excitement that surprised even him. He felt oddly compelled, as if by some strange magic, to tell this ancient crone all that he had heard of this earthly paradise, named Virginia, in America.

“We sail in a week from Glasgow, aboard the *Hope*, Old Mother, to a land about which we have heard so much. I thought it wise to pay a visit here, before we set sail. I’ve heard the faeries who dwell in these parts are known to bring good fortune if asked.”

“If ye be lucky, they might indeed,” she replied. “If ye be a man of good heart and spirit, the *Sith* may well smile upon ye, as they have smiled upon me, these many a long year.”

With that, she puffed lovingly on her pipe and, luxuriating in its sweet perfume, she continued:

“I have travelled the ancient roads of this bonny land since the day I was born...aye, and even before. I come to this place to thank the *Sith* for watching o’er me all these years, and to wish for continued good fortune as I travel the highways and byways of Scotland. Aye, I do. I do that,” the old woman said, puffing on her pipe, with a faraway look in her eye.

“What is it about the land of Virginia that so beguiles ye?” she asked Archibald.

“Well, Old Mother, I can hardly believe what I have heard of this place,” said Archibald. “That it is a veritable paradise; a land of abundance and opportunity in which we hope to prosper and flourish. A land of vast forests that go on forever, of fertile fields, of emerald green hills and rivers so wide they appear to be seas.” At that, somewhat embarrassed, he stopped and said: “Well, it’s only what I’ve heard. I can’t know if it’s true. I shall have to wait until we get there to find out for certain. But I have had such an unearthly feeling that traveling there is what I must do, and that feeling grows even stronger as I rest here in this magical place.”

With a knowing look and a nod of her head, the old woman told Archibald: “It be true, Young Son, it be true. I have heard of such wonders before, from others who have come to this very place. Ye are not the first, and ye will not be the last who comes here to bid farewell to the land of his forefathers, and set forth on such an adventure. My old bones tell me that you must go to this place o’er the seas, and I am seldom wrong when this feeling comes o’er me.”

She then pointed to the many cloth strips tied to the branches above them, and said again: “Behold the many wishes of those who have come before ye, to this magical place. Listen to me when I say again: Ye are not the first; nor shall ye be the last, to wish for blessings before a journey to the New World.”

Puffing deeply and reverently on her ancient pipe, she told Archibald to approach her.

“Come hither, Young Son,” she said. “Come hither. Before you leave this place, I will bless you with the words of the ancient *Sith* themselves. Close your eyes and await your blessing.”

With that, she placed her wizened hand on his forehead and uttered words in that haunting and strange tongue, words that he could not understand:

***“A h-uile la sona dhuibh ‘s gun la idir dona dhuibh.”***

And when he opened his eyes, she was gone. Not even the sweet-scented smoke that had billowed so voluminously from her ancient pipe bowl remained. Nothing, not a whisper, not a speck, no hint at all that she had ever been there.

Now, what Archibald did not know was that every word and detail of his conversation with the old crone had been overheard and carefully noted by a curious group of faeries, not far below, in an underground chamber of Doon Hill.

While the names of all the faeries have not come down to us, the name of one faerie, a famed leader named Lumley Timbersplit, has been long remembered as the one who brought the Doon Hill faeries on their long and arduous journey to their new home, across the vast ocean to Virginia. With his quite considerable ear pressed to the ceiling, this wise old faerie overheard all that was said that day. The timing was fortuitous, as there recently had been a number of faerie councils at Doon Hill concerning the future of the place. Many of the faeries were becoming increasingly unhappy with the hill's growing fame and popularity as a destination for the fascinated and curious. Besides that, the faeries' living quarters were becoming crowded in the all-too-narrow confines of the growing subterranean town. Speeches, led largely by Lumley, had been made about the possibility, for those who wished, of finding another part of Scotland, or even of the world-at-large, to settle. In that respect, the faeries again mirrored many of their brave mortal Scottish counterparts on the lands above, Archibald Hamilton among them.

The faerie leaders immediately set about developing a plan to emigrate. One of the lithest of the young faeries (by young, I mean under the age of eighty years, as some faeries are known to live to be over 300) would follow Archibald Hamilton to his lodgings in town. A bold, golden-maned young fellow named Swemmy Gruffus was chosen for this stealthy, daunting, and dangerous mission. He would return to Doon Hill and report on the place of Archibald's abode, with a complete and accurate description on how to enter the place. While this brave faerie was about his work, belongings would be gathered from chests and wardrobes, bags would be carefully packed, and sad and tearful farewells said, as a dozen or so faeries readied themselves for their plan, which was by far the most momentous undertaking put forth at Doon Hill in over 3,000 years. The small group of faeries was to go to the Inn at Aberfoyle, hide themselves in Archibald Hamilton's luggage, and stay with him all the way across the great ocean to America. When they had found a suitable place to inhabit there, they would send emissaries back to Scotland to lead others to the new faerie colony. With great longing, the

faeries had already heard about the rich lands and, most appealingly, the ancient and great forests of Virginia. They simply could not believe their good fortune that fate had sent this man to their very own hill.

That night their plan was put into action. After Archibald Hamilton's whereabouts had been described in the minutest detail, the boldest and bravest of the faerie emigrants (Lumley and Swemmy among their number) crept into town and very, very quietly ascended the steep stairs to Archibald's room, where he lodged at the most venerable and renowned inn in all Aberfoyle, the Fleece. Once in the chamber, they carefully, and not without considerable effort, opened the lid to the traveling trunk they found there and, beneath hats and socks, waistcoats and breeches, they made comfortable little pockets where they nestled themselves for the long journey to come.

The faeries had very little to pack. Other than spare clothes and a few tools, there was not much else they needed. Being very tiny indeed, food and drink would not be a problem; the faeries could simply sneak out at night when everyone slept and gather enough leftover crumbs or drops of ale spilled from the sailors' meals to sustain themselves. They would, of course, have to be careful whenever the trunk was opened and Archibald grabbed a pair of breeches or a shirt, not to be picked up with the garment and discovered, or perhaps even injured.

While faeries are not usually thought of as mortal, neither are they immortal. It is true that they can live for over three hundred years, but, nonetheless, it is possible for them to receive a life-ending injury. Being so small, faeries cannot allow themselves to be careless, as they can easily be hurt. However, they make up for this vulnerability with incredible quickness and agility. A field mouse is as slow as a tortoise compared to a faerie. Of course, most faeries can also fly, but the effort required is so great that they seldom do. Nevertheless, moving quickly to avoid detection whenever the trunk was opened was not the difficult problem it might seem.

The next morning, Archibald Hamilton left for Glasgow. The roads then were, of course, very rough and potted, but the faeries hidden away among the soft clothes had a very comfortable ride of it, and the clip-clop trotting of the horse lulled them to sleep.

A week later, Archibald, unknowingly, with faeries in tow, rejoined Francis in Glasgow. He was pleased and surprised to find that other members of the Hamilton and Calhoun families had decided to join them in their journey to Virginia. His sister, Martha, his brother, Andrew, and Andrew's wife, also named Martha, had arrived. Francis's brother, James, and his wife, Catherine, had come as well, with a number of their children, including their six-year-old son, Patrick. (As an interesting footnote, many years later, Patrick became the father of John C. Calhoun, the famous South Carolinian senator and vice-president of the United States.)

Two days before their departure, a grand dinner and ball were held at the immense Hamilton Palace near Glasgow, in honor of Archibald, Francis, and their siblings. It was a magnificent place for a family farewell, with vast grounds and gardens leading up to the yet unfinished, but breathtaking Chatelherault Lodge, on a hill overlooking the palace. All was a poignant reminder of the family and the world that would soon be left behind.

It was said that there were many strange occurrences that evening. It seems that the mischievous faeries joined in the festivities and, always keen to celebrate, indulged themselves in too much fine wine and punch.

A cherry tart somehow found its way onto stuffy old Lady Hamilton's chair cushion with predictable and embarrassing results. Black powder inexplicably ended up in Lord Hamilton's pipe bowl. His blackened face was the talk (and suppressed laughter) of the town for weeks to come. The rosin for the dancing master's violin bow was replaced with a hunk of malodorous cheese, and flashes of light flitting about the candlelit room almost brought the country dances to a standstill, as dancers forgot their steps and figures and bumped each other appallingly.

The next day, by explanation, it was agreed that the punch had been of an unusually strong concoction, and the whole hilarious affair was laid at the feet of the poor unwitting butler, Chives, who maintained to his dying day that the punch was the same as it ever had been. Yet, the punch remained, from that day forward, the reason behind the imagined sightings, misplaced items, and otherwise strange goings-on at the festivities the evening before.

## *Aboard the Hope*

Three days after this memorable event, the Hamiltons and Calhouns finally set sail for Philadelphia aboard the *Hope*. As was so often the case at that time, the ocean voyage was a trying and sometimes terrifying ordeal. Although the first few days at sea were calm enough with only a light rain, the winds picked up dramatically by the fourth night. The rolling and heaving of the ship caused much misery in the cluttered and stuffy space between decks. The miseries of sea sickness soon turned to terror when the foul weather increased to a full-blown gale. As the massive waves and howling winds battered the ship, the party of Scots was not at all comforted to see the countenance of horror on the faces of even the most seasoned sailors. It was clear that the ship would soon break apart and sink to the bottom of the sea. However, just as it seemed the vessel could stand no more, the winds suddenly ceased, and the waves stopped their tremendous pounding of the great wooden hull. The looks of fear on the sailors' faces quickly changed to ones of awe and amazement. The storm still raged wildly all around, yet somehow the ship was not being touched by it at all. It was as if the *Hope* and all of the souls aboard were surrounded by a mysterious protective bubble, where neither wind nor rain nor pounding surf could intrude. But while prayers of thanksgiving were being sent to heaven by the grateful passengers and crew, the faeries of Doon Hill were re-settling themselves after their exhausting efforts to summon the most powerful magic they could muster.

Faeries can summon several different levels of magic and, while some minor levels are commonly used, the highest are almost never called upon; usually only three or four times in the course of even a long faerie lifetime. The effort is so great and the recovery so taxing, especially when, as in the saving of the *Hope*, the very forces of nature themselves are set aside, that such magic is used only in the most critical of situations. This great storm in the midst of the Atlantic was clearly one of those times. Little did any of the human folk aboard the ship realize they owed their very lives to the fact that Archibald Hamilton, on a whim, had paid a visit to Doon Hill.

About the rest of the trip and the ocean crossing, there is not much of interest to report. The faeries rested for a full week before they ventured out

of their cozy trunk to forage for food and drink. While a number of people on the ship sensed something odd going on at night, and a few reported seeing things flash by their eyes if they awoke too quickly, no one could quite make out what was happening. It all was attributed to seasickness and to the stuffy air 'tween decks. But, after the strange rescue from the fury of the sea, nothing seemed impossible.

The voyage itself was not overly long for the time—about seven-and-a-half weeks. And while it was not the shortest voyage ever made to America, it was certainly not the longest. In early June, the Hope put in to the port of Philadelphia, then one of the largest cities in the British Empire. The group had been invited by their cousins, who had made the journey to America a few years earlier, to spend some time at their farm in the small settlement of Chestnut Level, near the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County. But what was intended as a week or two of rest turned into four long years. Several parcels of land had become available and, tired from their long journey, plans were changed. Instead, new homesteads in Pennsylvania, rather than Virginia, were begun. For the newly arrived Scots, the comfort and security of being among family in this new world put them in no hurry to continue their journey. The land was not the best, however, and farming it productively was no easy task.

For Archibald and Francis Hamilton, 1738 was to be a momentous year. Early in the springtime, they were blessed with a beautiful and healthy son, Audley, named after Archibald's beloved father in Ireland. A short while later, news arrived of newly available, choice parcels of land in Virginia's soon-to-be created Augusta County. Archibald and Francis decided to revert to their original plan and travel to Virginia. A number of years later, after her husband's death, Catherine and her children would join them, while others in the party would choose to remain in Pennsylvania.

During this long period, even the normally patient faeries had begun to despair of ever reaching Virginia, the land about which they had heard so much. They had made do with a temporary, and not terribly satisfactory, settlement not too distant from the farm. They kept their ears open, however, hiding in teapots and cupboards and watering cans for news of an impending move. When word finally came, the faeries were ready in a flash, and, once again, eagerly occupied their old spaces in Archibald's weather-beaten trunk. So in the spring of 1738, passage was booked on another vessel, the Joy, to travel down the Susquehanna River and the grand Chesapeake Bay to the

more southerly colony of Virginia and the town of Norfolk. In a week's time, their destination was reached. When Francis and Archibald smelled the sweet air and looked out upon the verdant countryside of Virginia, their anxieties melted away, and a contentment born of the knowledge that their decision had been a good one replaced their lingering doubts.

Archibald, Francis, and their newborn son were armed with letters of introduction to family friends in the area that would eventually become the county of Augusta, in the western part of the colony. This is the way that introductions were made when members of prominent families came to Virginia. The connections with those who came before were not broken, but rather used to create a network of support in that new world. Thus family connections that had existed for centuries in Britain continued, newly transplanted to Virginia.

Arrangements were made. Horses, a wagon and supplies purchased, and the couple began their journey west, past the bay, and up the south side of the great James River. They would eventually cross the James on the ferry, from the town of Cobham in Surry County. Once on the other side, they would travel the few short miles to Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, to take care of legal matters concerning their grants of land in Augusta County.

The roads were poor and badly rutted. In wet weather, the soft soil of Tidewater Virginia easily became a quagmire, allowing the thin iron rims of the wagon wheels to sink deeply into the mud. In dry weather, the dust rose from the roads in great smothering clouds. The name "Tidewater" refers to the coastal plain of Virginia where rivers and creeks are under the influence of the ocean tides. So, the journey up the south shore of the James River meant crossing numerous smaller tributaries. Many of these creeks and rivers are quite wide and were impassable without the services of ferrymen. However, ferrymen were notoriously unreliable, and often overly fond of the bottle. Sometimes it took a pistol shot or two from the opposite shore to rouse them from their considerable stupors. Baby Audley was not the only one to be startled by these loud reports. Such noises also frightened the fairies, who, unused to such loud bangs, scuttled about frantically, burying themselves under soft clothing deep inside trunks and chests.

Numerous smaller plantations dotted the way. Today, the term "plantation" brings to mind great oak-lined drives leading to pillared mansions. But in the eighteenth century, the word meant a farm, a place where crops were

planted. While there were many great plantations, especially along the rivers, many Virginians lived simply in one- or two-room houses, with primitive chimneys made only of wattle and daub, and a floor of clay, often without glass in the windows.

At the larger plantations, in the evening, it was customary to post a young boy at an estate's entrance along the road. Travelers, if they seemed of a decent sort, were invited to supper and offered beds for the night. In return for the hospitality of their hosts, guests would relate the latest news from wherever they had come and give a much-needed variety to the mundane routine of plantation life. The Hamiltons and Calhouns, clearly people of considerable quality, were offered lodging each evening, thus avoiding the necessity of sleeping in the cramped and unwholesome taverns, where often only shared spaces in the hard and musty beds, not private rooms, were to be had. Most of the plantations were modest, but comfortable; however, some rivaled the finely furnished large homes of country gentlemen in Ireland or Scotland, with their numerous buildings, vast acreage, and delightful views of the river.

Each night, the faeries would sneak out of Archibald's trunk to survey the surroundings. Some places had too little forest to satisfy the faeries, and all were too flat for those used to the green hills and rolling landscape of Scotland. The weather was getting hot and steamy as well and did not suit the faeries' delicate constitutions. One cooler evening, on a tributary of the James known as the Nansemond River, a number of the faeries, tired after weeks of hiding away in the luggage, insisted that it might be a suitable spot, but they were roundly outvoted by the others.

Eventually, the party of Hamiltons, Calhouns and faeries together reached the county of Surry, about midway between the Chesapeake Bay and the falls of the James River. Deposited as they were in the Hamilton trunks, the faeries could nevertheless feel that the ups and downs of the hills were becoming greater with every mile. Had they known that their Augusta County destination had mountains and rolling green hills very much like those of Scotland, the fairies might have stayed with the Hamiltons and Calhouns for the rest of the journey. But they did not know, and so they began to think that they might be nearing the end of their travels, as indeed they were.

## *How the Fairies Met Andrew and Thomas and Arrived at Lightwood*

It was early evening and the party was at a crossroads, just turning on to the road leading to the town of Cobham, where they would board the ferry. Soon after making the turn on to the Cobham road, they were hailed by two boys from a nearby plantation who invited them to stay the night. The place was only a mile or so away, the eldest of them said. With evening fast approaching and given that they were weary and more than a little bedraggled, stopping would certainly be best. The travelers all happily agreed. They lifted the boys up into the wagon, and, with enthusiastic chatter the friendly, cheerful lads directed them down the dusty road to their family's plantation, Lightwood.

Faeries are known to have an affinity for children that they do not share with adults. The sounds of the boys' voices immediately sparked the faeries' interest. Listening to the lads' glowing description of Lightwood—especially the descriptions of Lightwood Forest—the faeries' curiosity was very much peaked.

Andrew and Thomas (for those were the boys' names) led the party up the hill past the great white gates and down the lane to the plantation house itself. Now, the house that stood at Lightwood in 1733 has long since disappeared, and is not the later eighteenth-century pile that stands there today. Built late in the previous century—about the time that Robert Kirk was investigating Doon Hill—it was an old fashioned, rambling sort of house, deeply embowered in trees, with small diamond-paned leaded windows and massive exposed beams in all the rooms. Its sides were covered with split white oak, painted a deep red, and held in place with large-headed hand-forged iron nails. Its roof was shingled with cypress, weathered to a silvery gray. Heavy nail-studded doors provided entry into the house. A small porch tower guarded the front entrance, and a matching tower enclosing a stairway stood at the back. There was little ornament, either of architecture or furnishing in the house, but with its massive fireplaces, white plaster walls, and heavy oak framing, it had an air of old, honest, forthright English solidity.

Archibald, Francis and their young son were given a small, but clean and comfortable, attic chamber. Modern ideas of privacy did not exist then, so it did not seem odd that to access the staircase leading down to the hall, one had to walk through an adjoining bedroom; in fact, the very bedroom occupied by Thomas and Andrew.

Archibald's trunk was set firmly at the foot of the bedstead. The faeries within patiently waited until they believed all in the household were asleep. About midnight, they crept out of the trunk to investigate their new surroundings. Tiptoeing carefully, the excited faeries made their way through Andrew and Thomas's adjoining room.

While the rest of the household slumbered, one of the boys was not asleep. Too excited by the tales of the journey from Scotland, the esteemed rank of their guests, the hilarious account of the ball at Hamilton Palace, and the miraculous rescue from the storm at sea, Andrew could not slumber. He lay in bed facing the door to the guests' room when he heard the small squeak of a rusty hinge and opened his eyes.

To his astonishment, a line of about a dozen tiny tartan-clad figures tiptoed their way across the heart pine floor on their way to the descending staircase. Andrew had heard of faeries, of course; his dear and beautiful mother, being from England, had told him many an enchanting tale of the faeries who inhabited the rolling hills of her own green and pleasant homeland. However, he could not believe what was clearly before his eyes. He held his breath, his eyes growing wide with amazement, and made nary a move lest the little creatures became aware of his observation. The lithe and ethereal faerie folk made their way to the first step, leapt down, and vanished into the night's darkness.

Andrew lay there in stunned silence for a number of minutes. When his racing heart began to slow and he started to feel a little more like himself, he turned to his brother and roughly shook him awake.

“Thomas... Thomas!”

“What?” said Thomas, drowsy, and somewhat annoyed.

“There are lots of little people in the house!”

“Little people? They’re not little at all,” Thomas sleepily replied. “They’re Scottish people from Scotland.”

“No!” said Andrew, “I don’t mean them. There are tiny little Scottish people they must have brought with them! I just saw some of them going downstairs!”

“Stop it, Andrew. You’re bothering me. I’m sleepy, and it’s not amusing.”

“I don’t mean to be amusing,” said Andrew. “It’s the truth. I just saw ten or twelve tiny little people going downstairs, I swear it!”

“Really?” said Thomas, belatedly impressed by Andrew’s obvious conviction.

“Yes, really!” said Andrew.

“Then we must stay awake and catch them at it!” proclaimed Thomas in a most solemn way, still not fully awake.

“Thomas...what do we do if we see them again? Should we try to capture them?”

“I don’t know,” said Thomas. “We’ll have to think of something.”

With that, the boys lay awake, ears alert and eyes glued to the top of the stairs.

Meanwhile, the faeries had crept down the stairs and out the front door of Lightwood House. The moon was almost full that night, so the faeries, being largely nocturnal, were easily able to view the surroundings.

To the north and east, fields planted variously with grains and tobacco surrounded Lightwood House. To the south and west, a lawn ended at a ravine through which flowed Lightwood Run. Clustered about the house and a cobbled work yard were a number of outbuildings: granaries, woodshed, kennel, smokehouse, dairy, stables, kitchen, and servants’ quarters. The plantation lane faded away over a rise in the distance. Under the glow of the moon, everything looked magical and lovely.

However, it was not the buildings and fields that caught the attention of the faeries and took their breath away.

It was the *forest*.

## *Lightwood Forest*

At the edge of the field, spreading down into the large ravine, was the remnant of the magnificent primeval forest that for thousands of years had stood on what was to become Lightwood Plantation. Great oaks and hickories, beeches and sycamores spread their luxuriant canopies above massive trunks.

The faeries regarded the sight with awe. The forests of Scotland were very beautiful to be sure, but no Scottish faerie had ever beheld anything like the virgin woods of Virginia. The enormous trees, the rich foliage and the sheer variety of species were unlike anything they had ever seen before.

While the straightness of the oaks and poplars and the girth of the sycamores amazed them all, the giant silvery beeches filled them with the most excitement.

At Lightwood, the beech trees, which seemed to be numberless, grew all around the ravine that led to the lowlands and the stream flowing through Lightwood Marsh. The vaulting canopy and the smooth grey bark of the beeches evoked the columns and arches of the great church naves and castle halls of ancient Ireland and Scotland.

The faeries were not just interested in the beech trees' beauty, however. They were intrigued by what lay deep inside. For even the most solid looking beech, at its core, was often hollow.

For faeries, hollow trees mean many things. They not only provide above-ground shelter, but a safe and protected entry to their below-ground halls and chambers as well. A forest of hollow trees can mean countless entryways, lookout towers, and escape routes. Once a subterranean faerie lair is constructed, a seemingly endless network can connect one tree to another in a veritable city, both above and below ground.

The faeries fanned out and gleefully scampered about the forest. On an old footbridge, they crossed the stream that ran through the middle of the ravine. Up the other side of the ravine they climbed, their excitement growing every

minute. This way and that way, they gleefully dashed and, after a long while exploring, they saw it— a huge and stately grandfather beech arched over an adjoining ravine. It was ancient, tall, large of girth...and hollow. There was little question about it. This tree would become the centerpiece of the first settlement of Scottish faeries in the New World.

With the first signs of dawn soon to brighten the east, the faeries knew it was time to return to their temporary trunkish quarters. They didn't know, however, that the two young boys, having used the utmost effort to stay awake, lay in wait to catch them upon their return.

Very softly the faeries entered the house. They swiftly ascended the stairs, almost flying as they went, so eager were they to relate their findings to their assembled friends who so anxiously awaited their return. As they crept lithely across the floor of Andrew and Thomas's bedroom, the moonlight, which streamed brightly through the opened window, illuminated them, as if in daylight.

“Stop! Stop, I say! Who are you?” whispered Andrew hoarsely.

What a scurrying there was as the faeries dashed headlong into the corners and crannies of the room; some even scampered down a large mouse hole, much to the surprise of its befuddled and sleepy denizens.

That is, perhaps I should say almost all of the faeries vanished and fled, for one did not, but rather held his ground and turned calmly and with great bravery to face the wide-eyed, incredulous boys. This fearless faerie was none other than Lumley himself, the very same Lumley, the one, the only, the bravest, oldest, and wisest of all the faeries to have come to Virginia. This sage was, among his kind, considered to be the leading figure of the emigrant group of Trossach faeries and, in due time through his courage and fortitude, became a legend among his people.

Now I have already mentioned that faeries have a natural affinity for children, as do children for them. Had the voice that startled them belonged to a grown-up Lumley may well have fled with the rest of them, and left the speaker to imagine that what he had just seen was the last fleeting remnant of a fading dream.

But Lumley had already carefully considered the case of Thomas and Andrew and had decided after listening to them during the ride to Lightwood, that they were likable, amiable and, most importantly, trustworthy. He also, being very wise, realized that a band of Trossach faeries from across the sea was woefully ignorant and ill-prepared to face survival in a place as foreign to them as Virginia, where they knew naught of the dangers that awaited them in the forest. What wild animals, what poisonous plants would they find lurking and growing there? Did it snow? When might the rains be depended upon? These and many more questions needed to be answered before the faeries could feel secure in their struggle to build a new faerie demesne in this new world.

Who better to aid them than these two fine boys? The lads had lived their entire lives in and around Lightwood Forest and knew every stream, hill, and ravine. They could help and advise, protect and keep secret the new colony from those who would exploit it. And being young and innocent, they would not have the fear of something so unknown, so wonderful and magical as these folk from another realm. In return, the faeries could help them lead charmed and happy lives as the boys grew to adulthood, standing astride two such different worlds.

“Good evening lads!” boomed the diminutive fellow.

Both boys stopped breathing altogether for a very brief moment. And then with a deep bow, Lumley doffed his cap to the two wide-eyed boys.

“Andrew...Thomas...Allow me to introduce myself. I am Lumley Timbersplit, the tenth of my name, Lord of the Ancient Hill, Keeper of the Wishing Wood, and Protector of the Trees. My companions, however, call me Lumley. It is my wish that you call me that, too.”

“What are you doing here? Where did you come from?” said Thomas, who was shocked to say the least.

“I always say, and so they say where I am from, that the very best place to start is at the beginning. And so that is where I will start, I will,” said Lumley.

And with that, the entire known history of Doon Hill, the faeries’ travels, and their plans for settling in Virginia were thereby revealed.

For the next three evenings Lumley and a few of the bravest faeries, most notably Swemmy Gruffus and the much-revered Angus MacDooley talked with the boys throughout the night. While the faeries answered the boys' numerous questions, they also asked just as many. They learned of dangerous snakes and sharp-eyed night owls, of eagles and wolves and bears; of the ubiquitous and much-dreaded poison ivy and poison oak growing wild upon the trees and in the surrounding bushes and shrubberies; of deer ticks and tiny red bugs, commonly known as chiggers, which burrowed deep into exposed skin and lead to a hideously itching rash that took forever to heal. And just when the wide-eyed and gasping fairies thought they had perhaps embarked upon a misadventure of the most calamitous proportions, and had arrived in a place that might prove deadly to them and to their beloved kith and kin, the boys related to them many tales of both the beauty and benefits of this fair new land.

With deep sighs of relief, the fairies also learned of many delicious wild-growing edible nuts and berries as well as plants that healed even the gravest of wounds and the worst of illnesses; the locations of numerous sweet-tasting freshwater springs and of secret places renowned for the softest moss that could be used for bedding and pillows; of friendly welcoming creatures such as the kindly box turtle and the fearless and devoted squirrel, and even of creatures unknown to the Old World, yet found everywhere in the deep forests of Virginia and still known by their ancient Indian names—the fastidious and intelligent raccoon who washed her food before deigning to eat and the bizarre-appearing, yet wise, opossum.

Luckily for the faeries, the boys also knew when to plant by the cycles of the moon and where to plant good things to eat; the nature of the soils and when to expect abundant rain that would turn the fields lush and green; as well as the very worst of searingly hot weather and its dreaded accompanying drought. There was no need to worry about food or drink, they told the faeries. Virginia was a land of plenty, a munificent place that would provide their every need— if only they would work hard.

The brothers were beside themselves with excitement over the arrival of their new friends, the faeries. Their mother and father noticed and wondered. After several nights of so little sleep the boys' wary mother mentioned that their "color was off," and was sure that Thomas in particular was falling ill. But he wasn't falling ill at all, and as nothing was said to the boys' parents

concerning the faeries, they were left to wonder just what exactly was going on.

For the traveling Scots, one night's stay had turned into a full week. Lightwood had proven a fine respite from the rigors of the previous months. Finally rested and restored, the Hamiltons were ready and eager to continue on their journey in this astoundingly beautiful and glorious new land.

The night before the party was to depart, the faeries, aided by Thomas and Andrew, removed their own belongings from Archibald's trunk and deposited them in an under-the-eaves closet in the boys' attic room. While the faeries could not, of course, speak to Archibald and Francis, they were exceedingly grateful to them for their indispensable help in making the entire enterprise possible. That night they conjured up a great and ancient charm, spreading magical and mysterious faerie dust throughout the travelers' belongings and supplies, which would forever grant them great fortune in their own quest for a good life in their new world. They would thrive and prosper, be respected, and their descendants would multiply and spread far and wide throughout the new land.

The next morning the Hamiltons left Lightwood for the mighty green mountains to the west, never to know of their part in the great faerie epic, but to marvel at their continuous good fortune for the rest of their lives. From an attic window the tiny faeries watched as their last connection with their ancient and beloved Caledonian homeland slowly disappeared up Lightwood Lane. Their melancholy lasted but an instant, however, for the excitement of their new project was too strong to let them grow nostalgic for too long.

## *The Faeries' New Home at Lightwood*

The next few weeks saw a great flurry of activity as the faeries, night after night, began to build their new settlement in, under, and around the great tree. After several months a large faerie hall had been carved out beneath the ground nearby, and the hollow in the tree itself was cleaned and made smooth inside. The tree, which was the main entrance, and great hall were connected by a large subterranean passage, from which ran many smaller tunnels leading to private quarters, workshops, storage rooms, and mushroom gardens. Wherever possible these tunnels connected to hollow beech trees on the surface, to be used not only for ventilation, but as convenient back entryways and carefully planned emergency escape routes.

Once the rough shaping of the hall and other smaller rooms was finished, everything was made exquisitely beautiful with the finest decoration. Carvings, paintings, and mosaic designs brightened the interiors of every passage and chamber. Faeries are the very best of artisans and their work is amazingly fine and intricate. Today one might describe the style of their art as somewhat “Celtic,” but in fact the opposite is true. Several thousand years ago the Celts, then spread throughout much of Europe, had a special relationship with, and understanding of, the faerie realm. It was they who learned and borrowed much of their culture from the faeries, and the Celts’ artwork was their own interpretation of the very same faerie design that had been taught to them over the centuries.

In fact it was this pleasantly symbiotic relationship between Celt and faerie, rather than an accident of fate, which allowed the faerie civilization to survive with such vitality in the Celtic lands of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Cornwall, and Brittany in the northwestern part of France.

Individual faerie quarters and lodgings are quite efficient and comfortable. They usually consist of a large living area with comfortable furnishings of wood, stone, and moss and two to five bedrooms surrounding the main room, each with a separate entrance. As a faerie family grows in size, bedrooms can be added at will by hollowing out another chamber. There was no need for kitchen or dining area, as faeries always dine communally in the great hall. Lighting was provided by “lamps without any visible fuel” as

described in the Reverend Kirk's book. The hall itself was a long, vaulted room with doors in one wall leading to the great kitchen. At one end was a raised platform where the faerie leaders dined, along with other guests of honor, including newly married couples or newborn faerie infants and their parents.

It may or may not be a coincidence that the design and usage of the faerie halls is similar in many ways to the great early medieval halls of England and Scotland. Perhaps the faeries' ways were being copied in this regard as well, or then again, perhaps the building of halls such as these is the natural result of a more communal lifestyle, whether faerie or human.

Within six months the basic elements of the new faerie settlement had been completed. While the finished result was nowhere near the size it was eventually to become, it was still much larger than was needed for the faeries who were then residing at Lightwood. Soon several of them would retrace their journey back to Scotland and lead yet more of their kinfolk to Virginia, where a comfortable new home would await them.

Upon the completion of the new settlement, a most solemn and ancient ceremony was held; one shrouded in the deepest mysteries and most enchanting magic that stretched far back to the depths of a long-forgotten time; of a time long before the first humans ever reached the far northern and semi-frozen wastes of Scotland. Confident in this ancient and magical protection, the faeries dubbed their new home *Dun Sithichean Ur*, meaning *New Dun Sithichean* after their ancient and beloved hill in Aberfoyle.

Andrew and Thomas continued to aid and instruct the faeries on the ways of Virginia and became part of the faerie realm in their own way. In return the faeries dispensed much good luck at Lightwood; crops were always the best for miles around, illness seemed to bypass Lightwood altogether, even when the rest of the county suffered from various contagions. Thomas and Andrew's mother and father always sensed that something was different, but could never discover to their satisfaction just what exactly it was. Eventually though, still feeling that something out of the ordinary was at work, they simply accepted their good fortune with quiet contentment.

A number of years later, the Faeries made an exquisite set of pipes and presented them to Andrew and Thomas as a token of thanks and great esteem. Both boys learned to play them, and would go deep into the woods

to practice. The faeries would listen approvingly as the boys quickly improved their skill. Eventually the boys became renowned players on the pipes, both in the realm of men and the realm of faeries. The faeries taught them many beautiful and ancient tunes of the Sith, and often they would appear from amongst the trees to listen approvingly. For the rest of their lives the boys would take turns playing the faerie pipes. The faeries would gather, and they would dance late into the night to the sound of the pipes in the ancient forest. It is said their sound can still be heard echoing faintly on moonlit nights.

Over the years many more faeries from Aberfoyle arrived to live at *Dun Sithichean Ur*. The routes and sailings between Norfolk and Glasgow became well known to the faeries, and with the exception of the years of the glorious American Revolution, the brief but momentous War of 1812, and the great and bloody Civil War when commerce between Scotland and Virginia ceased, faeries continued to come to Lightwood well up through the late-nineteenth century.

I might add that another faerie enclave in the far northwest of Scotland also supplied a number of immigrants to *Dun Sithichean Ur*. In the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, a new model village was built on Loch Carron, near the Isle of Skye. There the picturesque village of Plockton was founded in order to aid the struggling fishing economy in that part of Scotland. So many Scots were immigrating to America that an effort to encourage them to stay took the form of new model village cooperatives, with easy access to markets and services. But what encouraged the Scots to stay had the opposite effect on many of the faeries in their ancient enclave at *Rudha Mor*, next to the village itself. With so many humans so close by, some of the highland faeries, feeling somewhat crowded, chose to join their lowland relations in the new Virginia colony, heard of by so many.

Among those early emigrants was a much-beloved faerie, Liliias of *Rudha Mor*, later known as “Granny” and “Liliias the Wise.” When she arrived at *Dun Sithichean Ur* in 1823, the respected and noble faerie, Lumley Timbersplit, then even wiser and more respected than ever before, was immediately smitten by her ancient beauty and angelic grace. After a short, but magical, courtship, they married with great pomp and splendor in the faeries’ great hall. It is said that one hundred harps and fifty fiddlers played for the occasion, and that the dancing went on for three full weeks. From

that time forward, the two of them reigned as the much-beloved leading citizens of *Dun Sithichean Ur*, for many years to come.

Lilias of *Rudha Mor* had brought with her a spectacular treasure, as a dowry of sorts, as was the ancient custom of her people. This immense wealth had belonged to her family for generation upon generation, and in faerie years that was a very long time indeed. This hoard was no ordinary treasure, however. It was, in fact, an endless treasure, for whatever was taken was replenished, and the treasure remained as rich and as splendid as ever before. Over the years, this wealth was used to good purpose, for both faeries and deserving mortals alike. Legend has it that this leather-bound chest is still buried in a secret place in Lightwood Forest, and that only mortals of a most special kind can find it. When found and taken away, a new treasure chest, overflowing with precious jewels of rubies, emeralds, diamonds, sapphires and pearls will magically appear in its place.

Not all of the faeries left Plockton, however, and the beautiful faerie lair at *Rudha Mor* still exists, nestled amidst the rocks of a small mossy glen surrounded by sea loch and mountains and well protected by the kind and wise old lady of *Rudha Mor*, also named Lilias, who has the good fortune to live there.

As the new settlement in Virginia grew and prospered, the faeries felt more and more at home with their new surroundings and eventually took on the dress and speech of the Virginians, only rarely donning tartan and plaid for special and elaborate occasions.

Thomas and Andrew kept their secret, only telling the tale to their own children when it seemed the right time to do so. They grew old and wise and taught their children to live happily and well at Lightwood. The tale and legend of the faerie realm passed from generation to generation, believed and cherished by all who heard it. All were sworn to the utmost secrecy, which, true to their word and honor, they kept. And thus the fairies at Lightwood lived, well protected, their secret assiduously guarded by the mortal descendants of Andrew and Thomas. And it is they who, to this day, continue to preserve and protect their tiny, beloved friends who occupy the subterranean world known only to them.

In 1852 a great disaster befell *Dun Sithichean Ur*. The earth had always been sandy and somewhat unstable there, and minor collapses of rooms and

tunnels had not been uncommon. However, in the spring, after a particularly long and hard rain, the grand and beautiful great faerie hall collapsed. Luckily, it was at a time when only a few faeries were there preparing the evening supper, and so none were seriously hurt. But the hall was ruined, hopelessly beyond all repair. Near the great beech tree, which still stands, can today be seen the large circle of sunken ground with a few toppled trees at the bottom, where the formerly great and magnificent old hall once stood.

A long counsel was held, and it was finally decided that much of *Old Dun Sithichean Ur* would have to be abandoned. Fortunately, there was a perfectly suitable new site nearby. Tunnels had already been built to the spot, which had been used as an outpost for many years. There were a number of available trees in the area, already hollow and being used for various purposes. But instead of using one of those, the faeries decided to plant a new beech tree in the center of the new lair to be the future grand entrance. A young sapling, sprung from a nut of the great old beech itself, and symbolizing a connection with what went before, was planted as the focal point of the new settlement. Years later, it would be hollowed out and put to its intended use. Meanwhile, faeries, being enormously patient, other less centrally located trees would serve the purpose.

For the next several years, work continued on the new settlement, and eventually it was finished; better and even more beautiful than the original. And thus *New Dun Sithichean Ur* took form. It is there that it remains to this day.

The old settlement at *Dun Sithichean Ur* is a place of reverence for all the New World Scottish faeries. Utterly ruinous, it is their Acropolis, their Forum, their Plymouth Rock. Faerie children are taken there and told the story of those brave souls who came from Aberfoyle so many years before. Although special ceremonies are held there on moonlit nights, they have been witnessed by few mortals, as only direct descendants of the boys Thomas and Andrew are allowed to attend; and of them, only the very few who have been told the “Secret of the *Sith*.”

## *More Scottish Fairies Arrive*

Over the years, many more faeries left *Dun Sithichean Ur*, just as their ancestors had left Aberfoyle to seek other lands. Their descendants can be found in many parts of the United States and Canada. The Pacific Northwest, in particular, with its mountains and forests and mists has proved to be one of the most popular new destinations as have the far northern islands known as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, the latter named in honor of the old faraway country. Nevertheless *New Dun Sithichean Ur* remains a vital faerie community, and although the exact population is not known, it is estimated to be in the hundreds. Two of the original settlers are even rumored to be alive still; ancient even by faerie standards. If that is the case, they are undoubtedly greatly revered and honored.

With modern means of transportation travel between Scotland and Virginia has become steadily more convenient. The United States Post Office is only a mile or so away from Lightwood, near the very crossroads, now the county seat, where Thomas and Andrew first met the Hamiltons and Calhouns. The pickup times there are well known, as are the airline schedules from Richmond and Norfolk. The Lightwood faeries have become quite adept at smuggling themselves into various parcels. When the parcels arrive at the airports, to be shipped as air freight, the faeries escape and negotiate the flights, eventually arriving in Glasgow or Edinburgh. In 1988, the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of *Dun Sithichean Ur*, throngs of faeries made the journey in both directions, to mark the event.

Either by incredible coincidence, or much more likely through something more mystical, a descendent of Archibald Hamilton and Francis Calhoun Hamilton purchased Lightwood in 1977. Now two boys also named Thomas and Andrew, along with their mother, father and beloved pets, call it home. A painting of Archibald, in his sixties, kindly, bewigged, and sporting a gold-trimmed waistcoat, hangs in the hall; his grandson's portrait hangs across from him. An old print of a relative, the Earl of Arran, can be found in a small downstairs bedroom.

In 2003 a deadly hurricane swept across eastern Virginia and many, many great old trees toppled in the wind; electric power was out for weeks. It was

during this storm that a large old oak tree, a few hundred paces west of Lightwood House was felled by the furious winds. The tree, although not a beech, was hollow, like so many others at Lightwood, and when the storm had subsided and the damage was being surveyed, an old glass bottle was found in the rotting wreckage of the broken tree. It had been carefully sealed with cork and wax, and many years before deposited within the protective cavity of the tree. Upon closer observation, several rolls of papers could be seen inside. It was these papers, when extracted and examined, which told the details of the story that you have just read. It can be assumed that descendants of the boys Thomas and Andrew (since only they would have been privy to so many facts) had placed the bottle there and had written the story contained inside. The paper, writing style, and ink seem to imply a date of around 1890 or so. The remnants of the fallen tree still lay where they fell, beside the old pet graveyard.

Since then a few snippets of information have been gleaned from those descendants of Thomas and Andrew who still live in the county. Much is still unknown, however, and will remain so. Most of the greatest secrets of the faeries will never be told by the few mortals who know them, and that is as it should be.

Today signs of the Lightwood faeries are quite evident. Tragically the great beech at *Dun Sithichean Ur* was felled by a fierce storm a number of years ago. In the earthen bank next to where it now lies, can be seen the remnants of several weathered faerie doorways and tunnels. Nearby, next to the hiking path, is the large sunken hole resulting from the collapse of the great hall. The beech at *New Dun Sithichean Ur*, now mature and healthy, with an odd bend midway up its trunk, stands in a small opening of the forest, at the edge of a pasture. It is on the branches of this beech and in the surrounding trees, that folk of the present time leave their own gifts and cloth strips, with wishes to be considered. As Archibald Hamilton did at Aberfoyle so many years ago, wishes may be tied to the low-hanging limbs. There is, of course, no guarantee that they will be granted, but I am sure that often they are. I am also certain that Archibald would agree were he but alive today.

Even on a moonlit night at Lightwood, when one can easily walk unaided through the bright, gleaming forest, it is all but impossible to catch a glimpse of the faerie folk. A rare muffled giggle, a sensation of movement, an occasional breath of wind on the back of the neck, are all that can be expected to provide proof of their existence. Your head might tell you there

can be no such things as faeries, only the gentle breeze rustling the leaves, or moonlit shadows, or the scurrying of a field mouse. But when you walk through the beautiful, magical, moonlit forest and reach deep inside yourself for the feeling you have next to your beating heart, you will know that without a shred of doubt...there are faeries, and faeries are there.

*THE END*

## *Notes on the Lightwood Fairies*

The faerie tree at *New Dun Sithichean Ur* still stands and can be found by following the trail markers on the hiking path through Lightwood Forest. If one follows the arrows and walks the complete trail, the faerie tree will eventually be reached. It is quite a distance from the house, but the walk to the tree passes through forest and meadow, and is a very fine way to spend an hour or two on a lovely Virginia afternoon. The trail also passes near to *Old Dun Sithichean Ur* and if one is observant, the sunken hole where the great faerie hall once was can be seen, on the right, shortly before the first meadow is reached. A bit farther down the path, through the woods, on the right, the gnarled beech of *Old Dun Sithichean Ur*, alas, now toppled and decayed, lies in the ravine which its branches shaded for so many years.

A leather box emblazoned with a drawing of the faerie tree is in the parlor of Lightwood House on the ancient low walnut chest in a corner by the window. Inside the box are cloth strips and a pen. Guests at Lightwood are free to use these strips of cloth on which to write any wishes they might have. The strips can later be taken to the faerie tree and tied to the lower limbs. As they decay, the wishes just might be granted. The faeries also like other tokens or gifts left for them in the crevasses of the tree. Coins, baubles, and other glittery items seem to be favored by them.

For those with young children, or for whom walking the entire path might be difficult, a shortcut to the tree may be made by going left instead of right on the other side of the footbridge across Lightwood Run. The path travels up an ancient roadbed, through the forest and to the tree. For those who enjoy walking, however, I would suggest taking the longer route; it will help to put one in the right state of mind when visiting the tree.

In Scotland, Doon Hill can still be visited in Aberfoyle. Next to the river in the middle of town is a Scottish tourist center with information

and shops. At the end of the parking lot, to the right when facing the river, is an old stone bridge. To get to Doon Hill, cross the bridge over the river and continue down the road until it comes to a fork. Take the left fork (on foot) until you see the signs for the faerie trail. The trail to the top of the hill is to the left.

The purported grave of the Reverend Kirk is in the yard of his ruined church nearby. Some say that his body does not lie there and that the grave is filled only with stones, while others believe that when the faeries transported his soul they left a changeling in his place.

Archibald and Francis Hamilton settled in Augusta County, Virginia, near Staunton, and had long and prosperous lives. They had many descendants, including sons who fought in the American Revolution. The last name of the boys Andrew and Thomas has been purposefully omitted from our story, in order to respect the privacy of many of their descendants who still live in Surry County.

It was a rainy day when I was last at Doon Hill. I was by myself and, being a musician, I had a flute with me. When I reached the top of the hill, under the “Minister’s Pine,” it seemed that to play a tune would be the right thing to do, so I played an old Scottish air called “The Faeries’ Love Song.” Feeling a little silly and self-conscious, I came back down the hill to my car, but before I got in I picked up a couple of stones, thinking it would be appropriate to place them under the faerie tree at Lightwood, as a symbolic connection between the two places.

As I opened the door to my car, however, the flute somehow snagged the door ever so slightly, and immediately shattered into three pieces. At that very moment, I swear I heard a shrill little voice shrieking, “Put them back! Put them back, I say! Right away! Right away, I say!” And so I did. I put them back so hurriedly that I stumbled and fell, earning myself a painful and unsightly bruise on my kneecap as a prize for my theft. It was only later, when reading Reverend Kirk’s book, that I learned that the faeries are angered when any “earth or wood” is taken from their hills.

So, please visit the tree at Lightwood and leave a wish. No guarantees...but you never know. And of course, don't count on seeing a faerie...but if by any chance you do, you will be very fortunate indeed!

## *NOTES and BIBLIOGRAPHY*

For those interested in exploring Lightwood, the house and grounds may be rented as an historic vacation holiday home or as a venue for weddings and other fine events. For more information please visit:

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

Kirk, Robert, and Lang, Andrew, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*. (Cosimo Classics, New York, 2005.)

## *Pronunciation Guide*

Dun Sithichean Ur.....Doon Shee an Oor

Rudha Mor.....Roo Mor

Cloutie.....Clow Tee

Echlin.....Ek Lin

Trossach.....Tross Ack

Sith.....Shee

Daoine Sith.....Da oo na Shee

And last, but not least...

*A h-uile la sona dhuibh 's gun la idir dona dhuibh*

May All Your Days be Happy Ones

*The Tune Lumley Timbersplit composed for Liliias  
the Wise on the Occasion of their Marriage*

**Liliias of Rudha Mor**

Cliff Williams

Waltz ♩ = 100

G D G C

Violin

Cello

7

Vlc.

7

G C G C D G G

15

Vlc.

15

C G D G C D G/C G

24

Vlc.

24

34

C G D G C D G

34

Vlc.

34

## *List of some of the Original Faerie Settlers*

Lumley Timbersplit, the Tenth of his Name, Lord of the Ancient Hill, Keeper of the Wishing Wood and Protector of the Trees, husband to Lilius the Wise, of *Rudha Mor*.

Swemmy Gruffus, or “Golden Mane the Bold,” brother to Nicholas Gruffus.

Nicholas Gruffus, the Magnificent, brother to Swemmy Gruffus.

Angus MacDooley, renowned Warrior.

Lord Timothy Frederick, or “Timoteo the Gentle,” famed poet.

Lord Sparksworth, the Fearless, husband to Kattegat.

Lady Kattegat, or “Almond Eyes,” wife to Lord Sparksworth.

Denis de Champeres, best friends with Flip de Floppe.

Flippe de Floppe, best friends with Denis de Champeres.

Lady Rosina de Rotetourt, The Ancient, of Root Hall.

Florinda Della Stray, wife to Young Alfred, loyal maidservant to Lady Rosina.

Young Alfred, husband to Florida Della Stray, and green-thumbed gardener.

Sophia Theodora Louise, or “The Golden Beauty,” wife to Swemmy Gruffus.

Othere, or “The Smallest One,” the tiniest faerie of all, and devoted maidservant to Sophia Theodora Louise.

Tabitha Golden Hand and her twin sister Twilight Evening Star, who were always together, never apart.

And last, but not least... Liliias of *Rudha Mor*, or “Liliias the Wise,” beloved wife to Lumley, and bringer of the faerie treasure from Scotland.

*Map of Lightwood and the Faerie Forest*