

The background of the cover is a lush, green forest. A path made of flat stones leads from the bottom center towards a bright, glowing opening in the trees. Sunlight filters through the dense foliage, creating a warm, golden light that fills the central part of the image. The trees have thick, gnarled trunks and dense green leaves.

FAIRIES:

Real Encounters
with Little People

Janet Bord

FAIRIES

*Real Encounters
with the
Little People*

JANET BORD



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J.B.

Foreword

Fairies are ... Immediately I am at a loss for words, for fairies cannot easily be defined. They are different things to different people – tiny gossamer beings with wings or malicious creatures who play tricks on humans; the lost souls of the dead or fallen angels; our primitive ancestors or beings from another world – the interpretations are many and varied, and all with convincing supporting evidence. For years I have wondered what fairies really are: are they objectively real, semi-real (perhaps from other dimensions), or imaginary? To many people fairies exist only in fairy tales, but my research has shown me that many people today, at the end of the twentieth century, are still seeing fairies, and not only at the bottom of the garden – though ‘nature spirits’ are still abundant, apparently not yet polluted out of existence. Anyone who thinks fairies are a joke will be very surprised to learn how many first-hand sighting reports are in existence, and it is on these accounts that I intend to concentrate in my search for the identity of the ‘Little People’.

1

‘Twas only a pack of fairies’

Fairy lore in Great Britain and Ireland

AS WE PREPARE to leave the tumultuous and fast-changing events of the late twentieth century for the uncertainties of the twenty-first, we find ourselves in a very different world from that inhabited by our great-grandparents at the end of the nineteenth century. Industrial technology, space research, worldwide jet travel, computers, televisions were all undreamt of, and country people, especially those in the more remote areas of Britain and Ireland, were familiar with knowledge and beliefs which today have lost their importance. This loss has left us the poorer. I refer to their harmony with the environment and with the seasonal cycles of the natural world; their knowledge of herbal medicine; their instinctive awareness of the life-force present in all living things, which could manifest itself in strange ways. They knew that other levels of existence interacted with our own, and they had evolved rules for dealing with this interaction. They sometimes inadvertently encountered the denizens of these other worlds, but they were not alarmed and took such encounters almost for granted. One group of entities frequently seen was the fairies.

Such a statement may seem incredible today, most people believing that the fairies only ever existed in folklore and fairy tales, so far have we progressed into the brave new world of technology since the time when the reality of fairies was widely accepted. Yet the fact remains that only just over 100 years ago, the existence of fairies was very widely accepted in the rural areas of Britain and Ireland, and a rich lore based on this knowledge had evolved. Fortunately a large amount of fairy lore was recorded for posterity, just before the rural areas became urbanized during the twentieth century. Today the knowledge of and belief in fairies has all but died out among country people, who now are subjected to the same cultural influences from the media as are urban dwellers. However the changes that have occurred this century have not resulted in the complete extinction of

the fairies: they have survived, because people still see them. Does this mean that, far from being the product of a bucolic imagination, they really exist?

In later chapters I will describe many first-hand encounters with fairies, the sheer quantity of these reports being persuasive of an objective reality behind a phenomenon which has almost been relegated to the children's bookshelf. I will also discuss the many theories put forward over the years to explain these encounters. Initially, however, I want to 'set the scene', to outline some aspects of fairy lore which relate directly to the country people's experience of fairies and their interaction with them, and I hope that by doing so it will then be easier to comprehend and make sense of the first-hand accounts which follow.

In the English-speaking world the name 'fairy' is the best known, but the word 'fairy' is relatively recent, deriving from the earlier 'fay', which came from the old French *feie*, which itself came from the Latin *fata*, the fates. These were the supernatural beings who presided over human fortunes. 'Fairy' should, strictly speaking, be used only as an adjective, meaning 'enchanted' or 'illusory', but nowadays it is used as the name for the inhabitants of the enchanted land, fairyland. Chaucer and other writers of his time used 'faerie' to mean 'enchantment' or 'illusion'.¹ Another familiar name is the 'Little People', which is a descriptive term, as are many of the other lesser-known alternative names, like the wee folk, the good folk, the blessed folk, the good neighbours. In Ireland the *sidhe* (hill folk) is a familiar name; they are also known as the gentry. In Wales they are called *y tylwyth teg* (the fair family) or *bendith y mamau* (their mother's blessing). These descriptive names are used because it was thought to be unlucky to use more direct names: to know the name gave one power over the individual, and the fairies would take their revenge on anyone being so familiar as to refer to them directly.

There are also many names descriptive of specific types of fairy creature, like brownie, pixy, goblin, elf, and other less familiar ones like urisk, hob, farisee and derrick. These and many other names are given and explained in what must be the most comprehensive collection of fairy lore ever compiled, Katharine Briggs's invaluable book *A Dictionary of Fairies*. Anyone wishing to acquire a more detailed background knowledge of fairy lore than there is room for in this book should read Katharine Briggs's writings; two other important books of hers are *The Fairies in*

Tradition and Literature and The Vanishing People.



A sixteenth-century illustration of fairies living inside a hill, trying to entice a knight to join them (Fortean Picture Library)

The fairies were believed to live underground, or inside prehistoric earth mounds, cairns and forts. This belief led to many such sites being named for the fairies: Fairy Hill, Fairy Mount, Fairy Knowe (several Scottish cairns by this name), and in Scotland numerous sites called Sithean so-and-so (Sithean means fairy knowe).² One theory is that the fairies were associated in people's minds with prehistoric forts because these were the dwelling places, or at least the refuges in times of trouble, of the earlier races of people, while the cairns and tumuli were their burial places, and the fairies were memories of these ancestors.

Lewis Spence saw the fairies as 'the spirits of the departed', and explained in his book *British Fairy Origins* that this was why they were thought to haunt prehistoric monuments: the ghosts of the dead were believed to dwell in the standing stones which marked their burial places, and also in other burial sites like cairns, barrows and tumuli. Spence gave

numerous examples of this association between the fairies and ancient stones, like the pillar with a Latin funerary inscription which once stood on a tumulus at Banwan Bryddin near Neath (Swansea, South Wales). An old man who had seen fairies dancing at the tumulus worked on the estate of Lady Mackworth, and he expressed concern when he heard that she was planning to remove the pillar to a grotto she was having built. Sure enough, soon after it was moved, a terrific thunderstorm struck the area, and next morning the grotto had disappeared, buried under the hill. The old man was not at all surprised, and said that he had heard the fairies laughing after the storm had died down.³

Both these theories as to why the fairies should be so strongly associated with prehistoric sites seem plausible, at least superficially, but for further discussion of these and other possibilities, see Chapter 6. The story of the fairies of Banwan Bryddin also illustrates another dominant theme: that they would retaliate whenever their sacred territory was interfered with. There are many instances of such behaviour documented in folklore, especially in connection with the Irish raths (forts), such as the following. A small rath only four yards in diameter was held sacred as a fairies' dancing ground and no one dared remove even a handful of earth. At night, music as if played by silver bagpipes could be heard floating round the hill, and a boy who lay down on the ground one evening to listen to it, at the same time idly picking up lumps of earth and throwing them about him (as boys are wont to do), was suddenly knocked back as if struck a violent blow. He was found lying unconscious, and it was a long time before he came to his senses and behaved normally again, the clear inference being that anyone who dares to desecrate the fairies' sacred ground will be punished by them.⁴

Such tales are not only part of the old Irish tradition: they have also been recorded in the present century. D.A. MacManus writes of a farmer called O'Sullivan, who 'some fifty years ago' (c. 1910) was mowing the grass inside the 4-acre fort of Rathmore between Tralee and Killarney. The grass was lush, but it was always difficult to mow because the earth banks prevented his getting the mowing machine inside and it had to be scythed by hand. O'Sullivan determined to make things easier for himself by getting his two sons to remove one of the banks. So next day they brought a horse and cart and loaded up two or three cartloads of earth, dumping it in a hollow nearby. After a while they sat down to rest and smoke a pipe. It

took them no more than thirty seconds to light up, turning away from the wind to do so, but when they turned back again they were amazed to see that the horse, who only seconds before had been standing harnessed into the cart close by them, was now quietly cropping the grass a distance away. Somehow, without a sound, it had been separated from its harness and from the cart, which was still close to them, its shafts on the ground. The men immediately realized that this was a sign to desist from interfering with the fort, and they returned home with horse and cart without further delay.⁵

This attitude of deference to the fairies still lingers on. In 1968 it was reported that the course of a new road in Donegal had been altered because workmen refused to cut down a tree which was believed to be frequented by the fairies. Even though he had just felled a wood, contractor Roy Green stopped work when he reached the gnarled tree standing alone in a field. 'I refused to cut it down, and I would not order any of my men to do the job. I have heard so much about these fairy trees that I would not risk it.' Another contractor was asked to do the work, but he also refused. 'There is something uncanny about it,' he said. 'The roots are not more than a couple of feet below ground – yet it defied a hurricane seven years ago.'⁶

The earth mounds and forts where the fairies lived were not necessarily large to look at, but once inside a different world was visible. One Irish man who was in fairyland for seven years told how he was taken to an area that looked just like 'hills and hollows', 'but when he was brought in, he saw what was like a gentleman's avenue, and it leading to a grand house.'⁷ Another man told of 'the most splendid town that was ever seen' in the hill behind the abbey at Corcomroe in Ireland,⁸ and the folklore descriptions of the fairyland hidden inside the hollow hill paint idyllic pictures of rich kingdoms where the Little People live in luxury.

The presence of fairies at a fort was sometimes signalled by a display of lights, and D.A. MacManus describes in his book *The Middle Kingdom* some instances of 'fairy lights' being seen in Ireland earlier this century. Two sisters who lived close to the fairy fort of Crillaun, for example, more than once saw lights on calm nights. One sister saw red, green, blue and yellow lights, the other saw white lights, and in the latter case she watched as they sailed in formation through the air to another fort on the far side of a small lough.⁹ Another of MacManus's informants claimed actually to have seen fairies entering a rath. She was working as a maid when this

happened, during the last century, and on her day off she was outside in the sunshine when she saw a party of eight riders, men and women, colourfully dressed and laughing. Thinking they were visitors ('quality', as she referred to them) coming to the big house, she started to hurry back, but as she did so, she saw them ride across a small field and into the side of a small fairy fort that was circled by thorn bushes. When her friends asked why she had not continued back to the house, she replied, 'Ah, 'twas no quality, at all. 'Twas only a pack of fairies going into the fort.'¹⁰ This calm reaction clearly demonstrates that the fairies were accepted as everyday inhabitants of the environment by the rural people in Ireland only 100 years or so ago.

The way into their kingdom was not invariably through a hill or fort, however. On Anglesey, the island off north-west Wales, a woman was brought a weekly loaf of bread by a fairy in return for the loan of her baking grid. The fairy told her not to watch when she left the house, but one day she did, and saw the fairy go to the nearby lake, Llyn Rhosddu near Newborough, and plunge into the water.¹¹

Heart Lake, south of Sligo in Ireland, is another body of water through which the fairies were believed to pass from their land to ours. W.B. Yeats noted that on one occasion, a group of men started to drain the lake, but one of them soon became aware that his house was on fire. Turning to look, the other men also saw their houses aflame and, leaving their task, they hurried home, where they found no trace of fire: it had been a trick played by the fairies to lure them from the lake.¹² Clearly there are many points of transition into fairyland; but it is unusual for humans to be able to follow the fairies through the entrance and also foolish to try, for not all of those who visited fairyland were able to return at will.

Not only should humans not interfere with fairy dwellings, they must also beware of harming fairy trees, and of obstructing fairy paths. Ireland has many fairy thorns which must not be touched, but also hazel, blackthorn, elder and several other species were special to the fairies. We saw earlier how even in recent years people have refused to cut down fairy trees: here is an example of what can happen if such a tree is felled. In Kiltimagh in Ireland around 1920 there were plans to build a new hospital, but two fairy thorns grew in the chosen field and the hospital could not be built without cutting one of them down. It was difficult to find someone prepared to do the deed, but at last a man came forward, and after

completing his task some of the local lads jokingly shouted a warning to him. He called to them, 'I'll be back, never fear, and to hell with your bloody fairies!' That night he had a stroke; he survived in a crippled state for another year before he died and was brought back to the town, as he had predicted – but in a coffin. The hospital was built, but never opened.¹³

Buildings constructed across fairy paths also failed to prosper. The people living there suffered mystery illnesses, their animals died, noises plagued the offending cottages as if they were haunted; some even collapsed. The doors or windows along the line of the fairy path had to be kept open at night so that the fairies could pass through; or if only a corner of the cottage obstructed the path, all would be well again if that corner was removed. Ideally the fairies had to be consulted before building was started, and this was done by turning one sod and next day checking if it was untouched. If so, the fairies approved, but if it was turned back, a new site had to be found.¹⁴

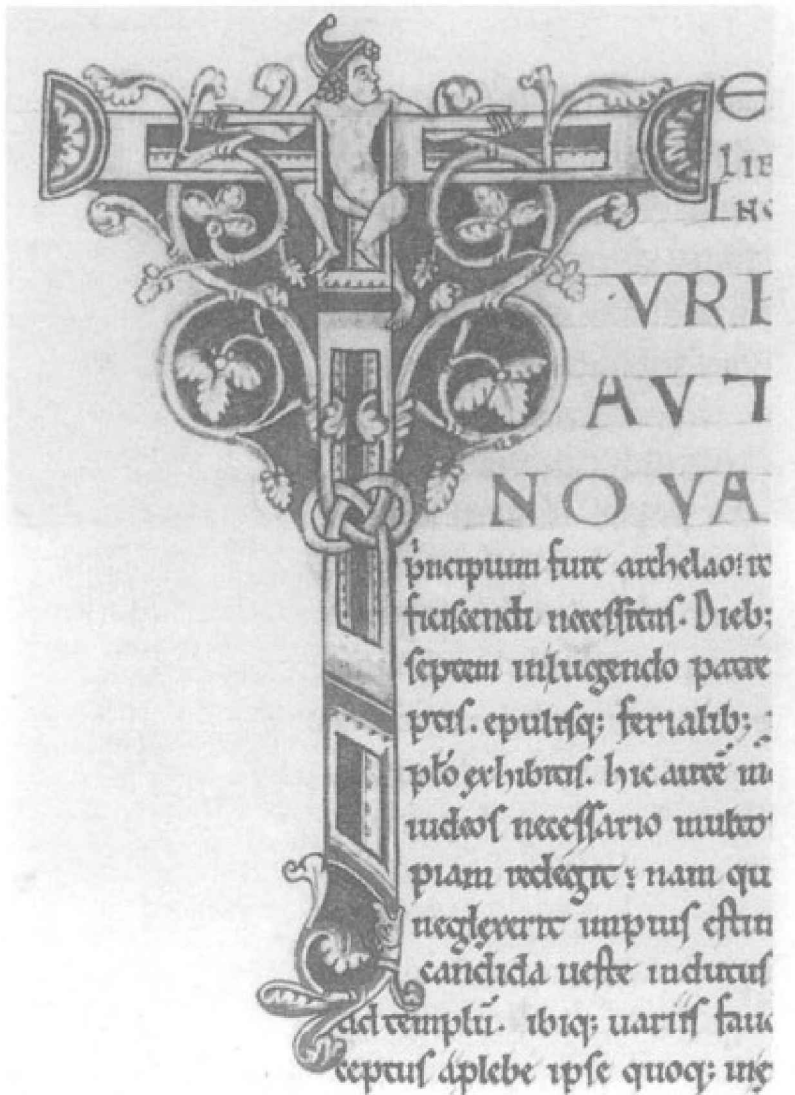
So far I have spoken generally of 'the fairies' without giving any indication of their appearance. Most people have their own fixed idea about this, being familiar since childhood with the fairies depicted in their picture books, but the reality is somewhat different, and the ephemeral, gauzy-winged creatures of fairy tales are definitely not the norm. A close study of the fairy lore of different areas of Britain and Ireland reveals that the appearance of the fairies differs from area to area, and from one type of creature to another. They vary in fact from the tall to the minute, and cover all sizes in between: yet the average seems to be that of a small human, around four feet tall. However, this question is complicated by the fairies' claimed ability to change their appearance. An Irish peasant living beneath Ben Bulbin in County Sligo, a noted fairy location, told W.Y. Evans Wentz, who was collecting fairy lore, that one of the 'gentry' he had spoken to, who had seemed only four feet tall, had said: 'I am bigger than I appear to you now. We can make the old young, the big small, the small big.'¹⁵

I will return to this aspect of fairy power, known as glamour, in Chapter 7; it may be important in helping to shed light on the nature of the fairies. If they do often, or even always, influence the way they are seen by humans, then a detailed discussion of fairy appearance may be judged somewhat superfluous! In the following chapters where first-hand encounters with the Little People in modern times are described, variations

in shape, size and dress will be noted but need not necessarily be evidence of anything other than the fairies exercising their powers to confuse; and certainly variations in appearance as described by witnesses cannot alone be used to judge an account to have come solely from the teller's imagination. Details of costume vary as much as physical appearance: green has apparently always been popular with the fairies, but they do favour other colours, and their costume ranges from drab to colourful. It is not outlandish, but echoes human dress of the place and time. Some Scottish fairies, for example, wore plaids and kilts. Cloaks were often worn, and hats of various kinds: red pointed caps seem to have been popular.¹⁶



Three illustrations depicting some of the variety of fairy appearance. (*Above*) A girl in Welsh costume accompanied by diminutive fairies, some winged, in a wide range of dress; a late nineteenth-century view of the Little People (Fortean Picture Library). (*Below*) A twelfth-century manuscript illustration of a naked elf wearing a pointed hat with a bobble, which should be compared with the twentieth-century child's drawing of one of the little men seen in Wollaton Park (see here). This may be the earliest known fairy picture in Britain (St John's College MS A.8; Cambridge University Library).



(Below) Hairy dwarfs dancing in a ring in a sixteenth-century drawing. These are perhaps the 'shaggy aboriginals' described here, a primitive race of pygmies (Fortean Picture Library).



In addition to generally looking similar to humans, the fairies also behaved like humans in many respects. They married and had children, they enjoyed eating and drinking, dancing and having a good time. Although mortal, they lived longer than humans, and also differed from them in possessing magical powers, but their closeness to the human race is obvious, and their interaction with humans reinforces this. Folklore is rich in tales describing how fairies have either helped or hindered people. They could be very useful in a domestic situation, and the brownie in particular was known for his keenness to help with the daily chores. He would not accept payment: indeed he could even be very offended by such offers. However he did like to take food left out for him. When humans did the fairies a good turn, it was generally rewarded. In an Anglesey home, for instance, the fairies used to come down the chimney at night, bringing their children, who they would wash in a basin of water using the soap and towel left out for them. Next day the family would find that the towel had been washed and ironed and that the basin had been emptied and was now half full of sovereigns.¹⁷ Gifts of money from the fairies had to be kept secret, however, or they would stop. A man living near Corwen in North Wales used to regularly find silver coins lying on the ground by a certain

gate. He kept his good fortune to himself, until his wife began to pester him to tell her where all his money came from, as he only worked in a tanyard. He told her that he believed the fairies were responsible. Shortly afterwards he died, and no one ever found silver in that spot again.¹⁸

It might be as well for me to comment on the veracity of the tales in this chapter so far. Of course, not having been present, I am not in a position to verify any of them. Some are clearly folklore, and I hope these are distinguishable from the first-hand accounts, or those said to be based on reliable sources. It must always be remembered that the reliability of a tale becomes less so the further one is from the original source. The last case, of the silver, is a good example: the letter containing this tale appeared in a Welsh history journal in 1886, and the writer said that his informant was 'personally acquainted' with the subject's wife and children, and 'he has no doubt as to the truth thereof'. That may be so, but the circumstances bring to mind the modern tales which do the rounds today, those we hear from a friend who tells us that it all happened to 'a friend of a friend', but which students of folklore will realize are of very questionable authenticity. So throughout this book, any tale which is not clearly seen to be a first-hand account should be treated with caution.

Although they are often helpful to humans, the fairies can equally well be a nuisance, or even positively harmful, as related in several of the tales earlier in this chapter. Their antics seem often to have resulted from their malicious and spiteful nature, this being especially so on those occasions when people have been led astray, unable to find the correct path, and maybe lost for hours. In England, the victim is said to be pixy-led; in Ireland the term is 'the stray sod', which refers to a turf on which a fairy spell has been laid, so that the person who steps on it loses his or her way. A number of modern accounts exist, like that from the president of the Nettlecombe Women's Institute, Somerset, recorded in 1961. She described her journey to a Cornish house, following directions from a nearby farm that when she reached two gates she should be sure and take the white one. It was a misty winter's day and the atmosphere was 'creepy'. She came to a thick hawthorn hedge with only one gate, not white, so she worked her way along the hedge, but could find no trace of a white gate. Then a farm boy came along whistling; he pointed out the white gate, just beside the other one, and returned to the farm.¹⁹

Turning one's coat inside out was said to be the way to counter the fairy

spell, but it did not always work. Other protections against fairy interference included a bunch of rowan berries, a staff of rowan wood, iron horseshoes fastened on the house and stable walls, holed stones hung over the cattle's food manger, and religious acts such as making the sign of the cross, sprinkling holy water, and ringing church bells.²⁰

In his book *The Middle Kingdom* D.A. MacManus devotes a chapter to modern instances of 'the stray sod'. These include the rector who in 1916 got lost while walking on a path he knew well. A stile set in a thick thorn hedge had disappeared, as had the gate he had passed through a short while before. He walked the entire length of the hedge back to his starting point, but found neither stile nor gate. Suddenly, two hours later, the spell was lifted and both stile and gate were where they should have been.²¹

Even stranger was the story of the girl who, in 1935, lost herself on Lis Ard, a fairy fort in County Mayo. When she tried to leave the hill, she found herself unable to pass through the gap in the outer bank: some internal force prevented her, even turned her round so she was walking back into the fort again. Panic-stricken, she tried again and again to leave, but an invisible wall was stopping her. She also felt an atmosphere of hostility growing around her. Darkness came and soon she saw the lights of men searching for her, calling her name. She called back, from only twenty or thirty yards' distance, but they seemed unable to hear her, and went away. Later, she suddenly realized that the barrier had vanished, and she was able to leave the fort and return home.²²

When people experience 'the stray sod' or are 'pixy-led', there is usually nothing to link the event to the fairies directly, other than the belief that they were responsible – although in a few instances the victims have heard laughter in the air around them, as if the fairies were amused at their misfortune. Likewise when 'fairy music' is heard, the witness's linking it with fairies is a result of the local existence of deeply ingrained fairy lore. Dr Thomas Wood, composer and author, heard fairy music on Dartmoor (Devon) when camping there with friends in 1922. He would go off alone to think, make notes for a book and write music. On one occasion, he heard a voice calling his name, but could see no one. Next day, visiting the same place again, he heard music in the air.

It was overhead, faint as a breath. It died away, came back louder, over me, swaying like a censer that dips. It lasted 20 minutes. Portable wireless sets

were unknown in 1922. My field glasses assured me no picnickers were in sight. It was not a gramophone nor was it an illusory noise in my ears. This music was essentially harmonic, not a melody nor an air. It sounded like the weaving together of tenuous fairy sounds. I listened with every faculty drawn out to an intensity ... The music drifted into silence. No more came, then or since. I was reasonably certain that I had been deliberately encouraged to listen to the supernatural.²³

Many other people have heard supernatural music, but it is not always attributed to the fairies. The psychic researcher D. Scott Rogo made a detailed study of 'music of the spheres' and he published two fascinating volumes of case studies and commentary relating the experience to other psychic happenings. He referred to the phenomenon as NAD, a Sanskrit word which refers to the 'audible life stream'.²⁴

Ethereal music may often be associated with fairies, although they are invisible, because of the well-known love of the fairies for dancing. In addition to many folklore accounts of this pastime, there are also some modern accounts of people actually seeing this happening, a few being included in Chapter 2. Here is an older account given by seventeenth-century antiquarian John Aubrey.

In the year 1633–4, soone after I had entered into my grammar at the Latin Schoole at Yatton Keynel, (near Chippenham, Wiltshire), our curate Mr Hart, was annoy'd one night by these elves or fayries. Comming over the downes, it being neere darke, and approaching one of the faiery dances, as the common people call them in these parts, viz. the greene circles made by those sprites on the grasse, he all at once sawe an innumerable quantitie of pigmies or very small people, dancing rounde and rounde, and singing, and making all maner of small odd noyses. He, being very greatly amaz'd, and yet not being able, as he sayes, to run away from them, being, as he supposes, kept there in a kind of enchantment, they no sooner perceave him but they surround him on all sides, and what betwixt feare and amazement, he fell down scarcely knowing what he did; and thereupon these little creatures pinch'd him all over, and made a sorte of quick humming noyse all the time; but at length they left him, and when the sun rose, he found himself exactly in the midst of one of these faiery dances. This relation I had from him myselfe, a few days after he was so tormented; but when I and my bedfellow Stump wente soon afterwards, at night time to the dances on the downes, we saw none of the elves or fairies.

But indeede it is saide they seldom appeare to any persons who go to seeke for them.²⁵

People who inadvertently came across fairies dancing were sometimes taken into the circle, with disastrous consequences, a theme I will return to later. Mr Hart was lucky that he was not abducted by the fairies, but only pinched. They do not like being disturbed at their revels, as was made clear to a Welshman, Edward Jones, who lived at Llanidloes in Mid Wales. Returning home late one evening, 'Ned the Jockey', as he was known, came across a troop of fairies who were annoyed at his intrusion into their company.

Requesting him to depart, they politely offered him the choice of three means of locomotion, viz., being carried off by a 'high wind, middle wind, or low wind'. The jockey soon made up his mind, and elected to make his trip through the air by the assistance of a high wind. No sooner had he given his decision, than he found himself whisked high up into the air and his senses completely bewildered by the rapidity of his flight; he did not recover himself till he came in contact with the earth, being suddenly dropped in the middle of a garden near Ty Gough, on the Bryndu road, many miles distant from the spot whence he started on his aerial journey.

Note that both the victim and his place of descent are named; the author of the account also claims acquaintance with him and adds that 'Ned, when relating this story, would vouch for its genuineness in the most solemn manner, and the person who narrated it to the writer brought forward as a proof of its truth, "that there was not the slightest trace of any person going into the garden while Ned was found in the middle of it".' But can we really believe that the events occurred as related? This story demonstrates very well the ever-present difficulty in distinguishing between events that actually occurred as described, events that have been altered and embellished in the telling, and events that are based on tradition rather than fact and have had familiar names and places added to give an aura of authenticity.²⁶

Circles of withered or bright green grass were often claimed as fairy dancing grounds, but these are likely to have been caused by a fungus in the soil, similar to the visible circles of fungi sometimes seen in the grass. Although known by country people as fairy rings, their true cause is now

undisputed. This cannot be said of the mysterious circles currently appearing every summer in the cornfields of Britain. Although these have not seriously been attributed to fairies, such an explanation might seem no more far-fetched than some of the theories aired. It seems worth mentioning this modern mystery in passing, because of the feeling of many people that supernatural forces may be at work, despite the insistence by the rationalists that natural forces and hoaxers can together account for the manifestations. In addition, at least one tantalizing mention of a direct link between fairies and a crop circle site has been published. Writing of crop circles in Leicestershire, medium Rita Goold said that she heard from the elderly lady who owned the land that as a child seventy years before, she was told to keep away from the field after dark, because fairies had been seen there and weird noises heard. Whether 'the fairies' were used as a convenient explanation for early twentieth-century crop circles, or whether actual sightings were made of fairies in the field, is not clear, but the association of the two is worth recording.²⁷

Far from being safely relegated to children's fairy tales, or disregarded as merely creatures of folklore, the fairies have many points of contact with the twentieth century. Anyone who doubts this has only to read the succeeding chapters, where many intriguing first-hand accounts are recorded. Even among people who have not actually seen fairies, fairy lore is still alive in the background of their existence, as evidenced by the way in which strange happenings are sometimes attributed to the fairies. For example in 1907 the *Coleraine Chronicle* published an account of strange happenings in the house of John M'Laughlin, an elderly farmer living in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland. He cut down a holly bush with which to sweep his chimney, disregarding warnings from his neighbours that the bush was sacred to the fairies. He soon began to regret his folly, when the soot he had buried in the garden found its way mysteriously back into the kitchen. He reburied it; again it returned. Lumps of the soot were found in the kitchen utensils, and it had marked the white walls and broken the crockery. Stones also appeared from nowhere, breaking the windows and other glass indoors. In addition:

A piece of bathbrick in a closed cupboard was, several people maintain, seen by them to hurl itself across the kitchen and smash into seven or eight pieces against the window sash. A stone weighing two pounds, used as a griddle

balance, was also observed to dash about. After negotiating two successive corners, it passed through the closed door into the parlour, where it smashed the window and tore a hole in the curtain ... Stones were heard to crash through the roof of the house and wood-sheeted ceiling of the kitchen without making any perforations, and were found resting on the kitchen floor. Some of the stones were removed outside but returned inside, of their own volition ... The milk vessels in the pantry were filled up with stones. Some persons say the threshing machine in the barn began to work of its own accord on Sunday.

Many independent witnesses saw the strange events for themselves. No one could control the phenomenon, and eventually the house had to be abandoned.²⁸

Students of psychic research will quickly have noted that the happenings in the farmhouse would nowadays be attributed to a poltergeist; though using that term no more explains the mechanism behind the events than would attributing them to the fairies. The same kind of phenomenon (whatever it might be) may also have been responsible for some of the happenings once attributed to brownies, who were said to both help and hinder the housewife in her domestic chores. As reported in a French book published in the early seventeenth century:

... there are plenty of houses haunted by these spirits and goblins, which ceaselessly disturb the sleep of those who dwell in them; for now they will stir and overturn the utensils, vessels, tables, boards, dishes, bowls, and now they will draw the water from a well, or make the pulley squeak, the slates and tiles fall from the roof, throw stones, enter chambers, imitate now a cat, now a mouse, now other animals, lift up persons lying asleep in their beds, pull the curtains or coverlets, and perpetrate a thousand tricks. These Folets do not bring any other nuisance than disturbing them, oppressing them, or hindering their sleep; for the household vessels all of which they seem to have smashed and broken, are found the next morning to be intact.²⁹

Colin Parsons reported a modern version of the brownie giving a helping hand in the house in his book *Encounters with the Unknown*³⁰ when he wrote of a couple who moved to a new house and were told by the former occupants that they had brownies at the bottom of the garden who did little jobs for them. The new occupants soon found out for themselves that this amazing assertion was true:

Dishes would be washed while they were out at work, the washing-machine would be operated and the clothes transferred to the tumble-drier. At first Jenny Bolton was convinced that she must be doing these things herself and forgetting them, and she visited her doctor. He found her perfectly well and prescribed a course of mild tranquillizers. The odd events continued, however, and now began to involve Peter Bolton. He would find the garden shed tidied or his clothes put in the wash or hung up in the wardrobes.

However, there was a sudden change of attitude on the part of the brownie after Jenny lost her temper with their invisible helper. Thereafter chaos reigned. 'Soap powder had been tipped all over the vegetables, taps had been turned on and plugs put in, furniture had been knocked over and jam rubbed into her Persian carpet.' Things got so bad, with the house shrouded in malevolence, that the couple had to move out permanently.

This account does bear out the folklore accounts of brownies being helpful if they felt kindly disposed towards a house's occupants, but turning into the most unbelievable nuisance if crossed or annoyed in any way. Perhaps other events described in folk tales also carry a grain of truth in them, being based on real-life events. Stripping away the story-teller's added layers to reveal the kernel of fact at the heart of a folk tale, belief or superstition can be an intriguing pursuit, but it is one fraught with danger, especially if the person wielding the scalpel starts his or her task with a pet theory needing to be supported. Even the most cautious seeker-after-truth tends to have some biases, and these invariably colour one's attitudes towards the material being studied so that awkward facts which do not support one's preconceptions will be discarded. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that no one is capable of studying any subject from a completely neutral standpoint; the conclusions reached are bound to reflect to some degree the beliefs and preoccupations of the mind from whence they came.

The following two tales seem straightforward enough. In both cases the events were attributed to the fairies, and who is to say that they were not responsible? If the witnesses are describing the facts truthfully, no logical explanation springs to mind in either case. In the early 1970s Charles Williams wrote in a letter to *The Countryman* magazine that his isolated Cornish cottage was supplied with water from a well that in summer became very low. He tried to find someone to deepen the well for him, but

was advised by a local to enlist the help of the pixies. What he should do was put ‘corners of pasty’ all round the top of the well on the night of the new moon. It was stressed that it must be a genuine Cornish pasty, and Mr Williams followed the suggestion. At that time the water in the well was only nine inches deep, there had been no rain for quite a while, and it was a fine, dry night. He reported that ‘When I went to the well next morning all the pasty had gone and there was 11 ft of water in the well.’ So long as he continued to put out pasty, the water supply was reliable, but when he was away, the cottage caretakers failed to take pasties to the well, and it ran dry.³¹

The custom of leaving out something edible to placate the fairies is deeply enshrined in fairy lore. Among the items traditionally used were barley-meal cakes (left near wells on two hills in Aberdeen, to propitiate the banshee), cheese (near the Cheese Well on the summit of Minchmuir, Peebles),³² and milk (newly-taken milk being poured on a fairy mound night and morning in the Hebrides to propitiate the ‘good people’).³³ If an offering were not left, the fairies were quite likely to take something anyway, as happened to Mr and Mrs Coleman, friends of author D.A. MacManus, who were holidaying in a caravan in Ireland in 1938. They stopped one evening beside a quiet country road in County Leitrim and got ready for the night. A country woman passing by spoke to them, and she advised them to ‘leave something for the fairies’, but they soon forgot her advice. Mrs Coleman decided to put their supply of butter outside to keep cool, so she placed the 2 or 3 pounds into a bowl, smoothed the top with a knife, put a plate on top and a heavy stone on the plate. She placed the butter under the caravan where it only just fitted as there was a mere twelve-inch ground clearance. Next morning she retrieved the butter. Both stone and plate were still in place, but when she removed them she was amazed to find two-thirds of the butter missing. ‘All the butter had disappeared from one half of the bowl which was empty right to the bottom, as if someone had cut down through the butter with a knife. The top part of the other half was also gone, having clearly been scraped out in a rounded way by something soft and blunt – a large tongue or a small hand, perhaps.’ There is no apparent way that either a human or an animal could have taken the butter. The Colemans had two dogs with them, who were on guard outside the van all night; they did not bark, nor did the couple hear any noises. In the end they had to accept the only possible

explanation: that it was the fairies who took the butter.³⁴

Although a belief in the existence of fairies was deeply ingrained in country folk over the centuries, objective proof of their existence has never been easy to obtain. This may explain why anything tiny has tended to be ascribed to them. If the item is an article of clothing, and especially if it seems well worn, there certainly does not appear to be any other explanation than that the wearer was a very small person. A good example is the 'fairy shoe' found on the Beara Peninsula in south-west Ireland in 1835. A labourer was following a remote mountain track when he saw the tiny shoe, which was $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches long but only $\frac{7}{8}$ inch wide, and in style like the shoe of an eighteenth-century gentleman. It was worn down at the heel. The finder was afraid to keep it, and so passed it on to others. When it was eventually examined under a microscope at Harvard University in the States, tiny handmade stitches and eyelets could be seen. The shoe was thought to be made of mouseskin. Another 'fairy shoe' was found in a bog in County Donegal.³⁵

Other tiny artefacts attributed to the fairies include a mirror, which consists of a brass plate on a moulded handle, and is currently in the Scottish Highland Folk Museum, and 'fairy pipes', small clay pipes with bowls scarcely large enough to admit the tip of the little finger. Found in various parts of England and Wales, they were known as *Cetyn y tylwyth teg*.³⁶ Fairy cups and saucers, basins and other utensils were found by children searching in the Fairy Glen or Nameless Dean not far from Melrose in southern Scotland, after heavy rain had washed from the stream bank small stones in the shapes of these items. The children believed that to find one would bring them good luck.³⁷ Tiny flint arrowheads made in prehistoric times and widely found in Britain and elsewhere in the world were known as elf-shot. Isabel Gowdie, a Scottish witch who claimed to have visited fairyland, said she had seen elves shaping arrows under the Devil's direction.

Fairy food has also been found: a species of fungus called Tremella, yellow and gelatinous, and growing on furze and broom, was in East Anglia called 'fairy butter';³⁸ while in the same area of Britain a fossilized sea-urchin was described as a 'fairy loaf'. One seen in a cottage during the last century had been covered in black lead 'to give it a polish' and was kept on the mantelpiece, the finder believing that to have a fairy loaf in the house ensured that they would never want for bread.³⁹ In Wales, an oil

found in limestone rock was called fairy butter. It had a pleasant smell, and was rubbed on the body by people suffering from rheumatism.⁴⁰

What all the fairy artefacts have in common is their small size. Although some classes of fairy folk are diminutive, there are many who are not, and so there should logically be fairy artefacts which are closer in size to their human counterparts – but of course, who would then be able to distinguish them from ordinary human artefacts! Fairy artefacts are usually (not always, but usually) easily identifiable as some natural object or obvious fake, and the only physical evidence really worth having would be a corpse. No physical remains of fairies have ever been found, though fairs have occasionally advertised exhibits claiming to be fairies, such as ‘a living FAIRY, supposed to be a hundred and fifty years old, his face being no bigger than a child’s of a month: was found sixty years ago; looked as old then as he does now. His head being a great piece of curiosity, having no skull, with several imperfections worthy of your observation.’⁴¹

Photographs claiming to show fairies are in existence, some of them being described in Chapter 6, but these too are open to suspicion, and some, such as the famous Cottingley photographs, are now confirmed hoaxes. If a few dubious photographs are the closest we can get to proving that fairies exist, are the doubters justified in stating that fairies live only in the imaginations of those who claim to have seen them? There is a huge number of reports of sightings, and only some of those which have come to my attention are quoted in the following chapters. But as with any mysterious creature – like the Loch Ness Monster or Bigfoot, which also have allegedly been seen by thousands of people – until physical remains are found which can be examined and identified, we are kept tantalizingly at arm’s length from the creature itself. Whether or not positive proof of the fairies’ objective existence is ever obtained, literally millions of people around the world have, in centuries past, been convinced of their existence, and those who in recent times have seen them with their own eyes will continue to believe.

2

‘Dancing with great briskness’

Reports from Great Britain and Ireland before the twentieth century

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER contained a mixture of folklore and fact: I hope that the majority of the material in the next six chapters is factual – but readers should still be critical, even of the first-hand accounts. None of this material is verifiable. It may well be that only those people who are psychically gifted are ever likely to see fairies, because the Little People are not physical in the way that human beings are.

Although most reports before 1900 consist of retold tales whose basis in fact is now impossible to determine, a few first- and second-hand accounts of a tolerable degree of reliability do survive. The earliest I have found is the seventeenth-century report by John Aubrey of Mr Hart being pinched by fairies after watching them dancing (see here).

Around the same time that Mr Hart had his uncomfortable encounter, Scottish witch Isobel Gowdie was getting to know the Little People, as she explained in 1662 in her confession to witch-craft. Here are relevant extracts, which I have rendered into current English, for ease of reading:

I was in the Downie-hills, and got meat there from the Queen of Faery, more than I could eat. The Queen of Faery is well clothed in white linens, and in white and brown clothes, etc.; and the King of Faery is a fine man, well favoured, and broad faced, etc. There were elf-bulls ‘rowtting and skoylling’ up and down there, which frightened me.

As for elf arrowheads, the Devil shapes them with his own hand and delivers them to elf-boys, who shape and trim them with a sharp thing like a needle, ... the Devil gives them to us, each of us so many ... We have no bow to shoot with, but jerk them from our thumb-nails. Sometimes we will miss, but if they touch, be it beast, or man, or woman, it will kill, even if they are wearing a coat of mail.¹

John Beaumont, who published his *Treatise of Spirits* in 1705, wrote in some detail of his encounters with various spirits. Those I judge to have been fairies, he described as

being of a brown complexion, and about three foot in stature; they had both black, loose network gowns, tied with a black sash about their middles, and within the network appeared a gown of a golden colour, with somewhat of a light striking through it; their heads were not dressed with topknots, but they had white linen caps on, with lace on them ... and over it they had a black loose network hood ...

On one occasion he saw them ‘dance in a ring in the garden, and sing, holding hands round, not facing each other, but their backs turned to the inner part of the circle’. He once asked them who they were, and they told him that ‘they were an order of creatures superior to mankind, and could influence our thoughts, and that their habitation was in the air’.²

It is perhaps wise not to take the two previous reports too seriously. Alleged witches’ confessions are notoriously unreliable, and John Beaumont, judging by a fuller reading of his description of the spirits who visited him, seems to have been living in something of a dream world, and perhaps was not too able to distinguish between reality and imagination. The next witness, however, was a well-respected eighteenth-century cleric, at one time Principal of the Independent Academy at Rotherham.

The Reverend Dr Edward Williams was born at Bodfari (Denbighshire, North Wales), and the events he describes took place there in 1757 when he was seven years old. In later life he said he was ‘forced to class it among my *unknowables*’.

On a fine summer day (about midsummer) between the hours of 12 at noon and one, my eldest sister and myself, our next neighbour’s children Barbara and Ann Evans, both older than myself, were in a field called Cae Caled near their house, all innocently engaged at play by a hedge under a tree, and not far from the stile next to that house, when one of us observed on the middle of the field a company of – what shall I call them? – *Beings*, neither men, women, nor children, dancing with great briskness. They were full in view less than a hundred yards from us, consisting of about seven or eight couples: we could not well reckon them, owing to the briskness of their motions and the consternation with which we were struck at a sight so unusual. They were all

clothed in red, a dress not unlike a military uniform, without hats, but their heads tied with handkerchiefs of a reddish colour, sprigged or spotted with yellow, all uniform in this as in habit, all tied behind with the corners hanging down their backs, and white handkerchiefs in their hands held loose by the corners. They appeared of a size somewhat less than our own, but more like dwarfs than children. On the first discovery we began, with no small dread, to question one another as to what they could be, as there were no soldiers in the country, nor was it the time for May dancers, and as they differed much from all the human beings we had ever seen. Thus alarmed we dropped our play, left our station, and made for the stile. Still keeping our eyes upon them we observed one of their company starting from the rest and making towards us with a running pace. I being the youngest was the last at the stile, and, though struck with an inexpressible panic, saw the *grim elf* just at my heels, having a full and clear, though terrific view of him, with his ancient, swarthy, and grim complexion. I screamed out exceedingly; my sister also and our companions set up a roar, and the former dragged me with violence over the stile on which, at the instant I was disengaged from it, this warlike Lilliputian leaned and stretched himself after me, but came not over. With palpitating hearts and loud cries we ran towards the house, alarmed the family, and told them our trouble. The men instantly left their dinner, with whom still trembling we went to the place, and made the most solicitous and diligent enquiry in all the neighbourhood, both at that time and after, but never found the least vestige of any circumstance that could contribute to a solution of this remarkable phenomenon.³

If Dr Williams remembered the events accurately, and was not inadvertently blending details of fairy lore he had been told as a child with some other real but explicable frightening event in his childhood, then there seems no easy explanation – other than that the children were somehow for a short while able to glimpse what humans cannot normally see.

A similar vision, of strange cavorting figures in a field, was seen in the Isle of Man, some time in the eighteenth century, by a man who until that time did not believe in fairies. The experience is described by George Waldron, an Englishman on the island who was acting for the British government, watching and reporting on the import and export trade of the country between 1720 and 1730.

A gentleman, my near neighbour, who affirmed with the most solemn asseverations that, being entirely averse to the belief in fairies, or that any such beings were permitted to wander for the purposes related of them, had been at last convinced by the appearance of several little figures, playing and leaping over some stones in a field, whom, a few yards distant, he imagined were school boys, and intended, when he came near enough, to reprimand, for being absent from their exercises at that time of the day, it being then, he said, between three and four of the clock. But when he approached, as near he could guess, within twenty paces, they all immediately disappeared, though he had never taken his eye off them from the first moment he beheld them; nor was there any place where they could so suddenly retreat, it being an open field, without hedge or bush, and, as is said before, broad day.⁴

The host of fairies seen at Ilkley Wells (West Yorkshire) in 1815 by the man in charge of the healing baths were the smaller variety clad in green, rather than the much more common human-looking creatures. William Butterfield went to unlock the door to the baths early in the morning, but found that the key turned round and round in the lock. His story of what happened next was told to John Dobson, also from Ilkley, who reported it in these words:

Then he endeavoured to push the door open, and no sooner did he push it slightly ajar than it was as quickly pushed back again. At last, with one supreme effort, he forced it perfectly open, and back it flew with a great bang! Then whirr, whirr, whirr, such a noise and sight! all over the water and dipping into it was a lot of little creatures dressed in green from head to foot, none of them more than eighteen inches high, and making a chatter and a jabber thoroughly unintelligible. They seemed to be taking a bath, only they bathed with all their clothes on. Soon, however, one or two of them began to make off, bounding over the walls like squirrels. Finding they were all making ready for decamping, and wanting to have a word with them, he shouted at the top of his voice – indeed, he declared afterwards he couldn't find anything else to say or do – 'Hallo there!' Then away the whole tribe went, helter skelter, toppling and tumbling, heads over heels, heels over heads, and all the while making a noise not unlike that of a disturbed nest of young partridges. The sight was so unusual, that he declared he either couldn't or daren't attempt to rush after them. ... When the well had got quite clear of these strange beings he ran to the door and looked to see where they had fled, but nothing was to be seen. He

ran back into the bath to see if they had left anything behind; but there was nothing: the water lay still and clear just as he had left it the previous night. He thought they might perhaps have left some of their clothing behind in their haste, but he could find none, and so he gave up looking, and commenced his usual routine of preparing the baths; not, however, without trotting to the door once or twice to see if they might be coming back; but he saw them no more.⁵

Very often, people who see fairies come across them suddenly and unexpectedly; certainly they are not thinking about them at the time of the encounter. It may be that a certain detachment of mind may be a prerequisite to having what is clearly some kind of psychic experience, and the lone traveller is well placed to be in a receptive condition. A Stowmarket (Suffolk) man walking home one moonlit night in 1842, suddenly came across a group of fairies:

There might be a dozen of them, the biggest about three feet high, and small ones like dolls. Their dresses sparkled as if with spangles, like the girls at shows at Stow fair. They were moving round hand in hand in a ring, no noise came from them. They seemed light and shadowy, not like solid bodies. I passed on saying, the Lord have mercy on me, but them must be the fairies, and being alone then on the path over the field could see them as plain as I do you. I looked after them when I got over the stile, and they were there, just the same moving round and round. I ran home and called three women to come back with me and see them. But when we got to the place they were all gone. I could not make out any particular things about their faces. I might be forty yards from them and I did not like to stop and stare at them. I was quite sober at the time.⁶

The next witness was similarly alone at the time of his experience, which took place around the mid-nineteenth century. The account is second-hand, but as the author was a relative of the witness, I am assuming it is reliable.

... a near relative of the writer, not more imbued with superstition than the majority, firmly believed that he once saw a real dwarf or fairy, without the use of any incantation. He had been amusing himself one summer evening on the top of Mellor Moor, near Blackburn, close to the remains of the Roman encampment, when his attention was arrested by the appearance of a dwarf-

like man, attired in full hunting costume, with top-boots and spurs, a green jacket, red hairy cap, and a thick hunting whip in his hand. He ran briskly along the moor for a considerable distance, when, leaping over a low stone wall, he darted down a steep declivity, and was lost to sight. The popular opinion of the neighbourhood is, that an underground city exists at this place; that an earthquake swallowed up the encampment, and that on certain days in the year the hill folk may be heard ringing their bells, and indulging in various festivities. Considerable quantities of stone, which still remain around the ditches of this rectangular place, may have suggested the ideas of a city and an earthquake. On other occasions the fairies are supposed to exhibit themselves in military array on the mountain sides; their evolutions conforming in every respect to the movements of modern troops. Such appearances are believed to portend the approach of civil commotions, and are said to have been more than usually common about the time of the rebellion in 1745–6.⁷

W.Y. Evans Wentz, who was collecting fairy lore in Ireland early this century, was told by Neil Colton, then seventy-three years old, of a sighting he had had personally, close to the shores of Lough Derg in County Donegal. This probably took place around the middle of the nineteenth century.

One day, just before sunset in midsummer, and I a boy then, my brother and cousin and myself were gathering bilberries (whortleberries) up by the rocks at the back of here, when all at once we heard music. We hurried round the rocks, and there we were within a few hundred feet of six or eight of the *gentle folk*, and they dancing. When they saw us, a little woman dressed all in red came running out from them towards us, and she struck my cousin across the face with what seemed to be a green rush. We ran for home as hard as we could, and when my cousin reached the house she fell dead. Father saddled a horse and went for Father Ryan. When Father Ryan arrived, he put a stole about his neck and began praying over my cousin and reading psalms and striking her with the stole; and in that way brought her back. He said if she had not caught hold of my brother, she would have been *taken* for ever.⁸

Also around the mid-nineteenth century, a strange encounter with supposed fairy folk took place in Wales. Although a considerable quantity of fairy lore has been collected in Wales, first-hand accounts are in short supply. This one reminds us that such encounters are often accompanied by

a strange otherworldly atmosphere.

A very old man named John Jones, who lives at Llanddeiniol, about six miles from Aberystwyth, informed me that many years ago, when he was a young man, or a lad of 18, he was engaged as a servant at a farm called Perthrhys, in that neighbourhood. One evening after supper he went to the tailor who was making him a suit of clothes; but as the clothes were not quite ready he had to wait till a late hour before returning home, but it was a delightful moonlight night. As he proceeded along a lonely path across a certain moor known as Rhosrhydd, and happened to look back he was suddenly surprised by seeing two young men or boys as he thought, coming after him. At first he thought these were some boys trying to frighten him; but after they had followed him for a short distance till they came within about 30 or 40 yards of him, they turned out from the path, and began to jump and to dance, going round and round as if they followed a ring or a circle just as we hear of the fairies. They were perfectly white, and very nimble, and the old man informed me that there was something supernatural both in their appearance and movements; and that he is convinced to this day that they could not have been human beings. When he arrived home at the farm, and related his adventure, every one in the house was of the opinion that the strange beings he had seen were the Fairies.⁹



An old English chapbook illustration of fairies dancing. This drawing has several intriguing features. Note on the left the fairy hill, complete with door – clearly an entrance into fairyland. Note also the face in the tree foliage: the green man or vegetation spirit described here. There is even a prominent ‘magic mushroom’, the mind-affecting qualities of which may have had a part to play in some encounters with Little People (see here) (Fortean Picture Library).

Unlike the previous encounter, the next one did not feel supernatural to the onlookers. They were surprised to see men (as they thought) behaving so strangely, but never considered there might be a supernatural explanation. However, the behaviour they described is familiar, echoing as it does that of the other dancing fairies already described. One (unanswerable) question that arises is: Why are the fairies so often seen ‘dancing’?

In August, 1862, David Evans, and Evan Lewis, went from the Coast of

Cardiganshire with their waggons all the way to Brecon for some timber for ship-building, which was going on at New Quay. On their return journey, through Carmarthenshire, they stopped for a short time at a place called Cwmdwr on the road leading from Llanwrda to Lampeter. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the two men and their horses and waggons were standing opposite a farm known as Maestwynog, where the reapers were busy at work in a wheat-field close by. As they were looking in the direction of a hillside not far off, David Evans saw about fifty small wheat stacks (*sopynau bychain*), as he at first thought. On second sight, however, he noticed that they were moving about, he took them for reapers. They were all dressed exactly alike, and walked fast one after another up the hillside footpath. David Evans now called the attention of his companion Evan Lewis, whom he asked who the men could have been; but before he had time to make any further remarks, the first of those who were climbing up along the winding footpath had reached a small level spot on the top of the hill. The others quickly followed him, and each one in coming to the top, gave a jump to dance, and they formed a circle. After dancing for a short time, one of the dancers turned in into the middle of the circle, followed by the others, one by one till they appeared like a gimblet [*sic*] screw. Then they disappeared into the ground. After a while one of them reappeared again, and looked about him in every direction as a rat, and the others followed him one by one and did the same. Then they danced for some time as before, and vanished into the ground as they had done the first time. The two men, David Evans and Evan Lewis, were watching them from a distance of about 400 yards and were more than astonished to see men, as they thought, acting in such a strange and curious manner on the hill. They continued looking for some time but the dancers did not appear again. At last the two men proceeded on their journey till they came to an old man working on the road whom they asked whether he knew anything about the men they had seen dancing in a circle on the hill behind Maestwynog. The old man replied that he had not the least idea, but had heard his grandfather say that the Tylwyth Teg (Fairies) used to dance in his time, at which explanation our two friends smiled.¹⁰

After two encounters with dancing fairies in west Wales, there follow two experiences involving Isle of Man fairies, all dressed in red. Around 1870, T.C. Kermode, a member of the Manx Parliament, saw them, as he later described.

There is much belief here in the island that there actually are fairies; and I consider such belief based on an actual fact in nature, because of my own strange experience. About forty years ago, one October night, I and another young man were going to a kind of Manx harvest-home at Cronk-a-Voddy. On the Glen Helen road, just at the Beary Farm, as we walked along talking, my friend happened to look across the river (a small brook), and said: 'Oh look, there are the fairies. Did you ever see them?' I looked across the river and saw a circle of supernatural light, which I have now come to regard as the 'astral light' or the light of Nature, as it is called by mystics, and in which spirits become visible. The spot where the light appeared was a flat space surrounded on the sides away from the river by banks formed by low hills; and into this space and the circle of light, from the surrounding sides apparently, I saw come in twos and threes a great crowd of little beings smaller than Tom Thumb and his wife. All of them, who appeared like soldiers, were dressed in red. They moved back and forth amid the circle of light, as they formed into order like troops drilling. I advised getting nearer to them, but my friend said, 'No, I'm going to the party.' Then after we had looked at them a few minutes my friend struck the roadside wall with a stick and shouted, and we lost the vision and the light vanished.¹¹

Kermode acknowledged that the experience was some kind of a vision, which they watched from a distance, whereas the next Isle of Man witness quite definitely claimed to have had an interactive encounter with the fairies, one he would have preferred not to have had. The details were collected in 1887, only three years after the events, so are likely to be accurate, and the collector, William Martin, spoke to the witness.

One evening during the summer months of 1884, the driver of the mail-cart from one of the towns in the island started on his round to collect the mail-bags from the surrounding district in the usual manner. He was due at his destination about half-past one o'clock in the morning, but did not arrive until nearly half-past five, when he appeared dreadfully scared and agitated. Being asked to account for his delay, he solemnly related that when about six miles from home he was beset by a troop of fairies, all of whom were particularly well-dressed in red suits and provided with lanterns. They stopped his horse, threw the mail-bags into the road, and danced around them in the well-known manner usual with fairies. The poor postman struggled with them in vain. No sooner did he succeed in replacing a bag than it was again immediately thrown

out. This continued until the appearance of daylight, when the fairies apparently thought it was time for them to take their departure, which they eventually did, leaving the postman in a highly nervous and exhausted state. After resting a short time to collect his scattered wits, he succeeded in replacing the mails in his cart, and reached the end of his journey without further adventures. When I made acquaintance with him some little time afterwards, he did not strike me as a person likely to fall victim to his own fertile imagination. As for doubts with respect to his condition at the time, it can only be said that he had left the post office that night in his usual condition of sobriety, and did not appear the worse for drink when he returned. Moreover, his character for sobriety and honesty was of many years' standing.¹²

In most encounters with the Little People, the witness(es) only see the creatures for a short time, and rarely have any interaction with them. A fairy might acknowledge the presence of the human by looking directly at, even smiling at, him or her, but otherwise usually ignores the surprised onlooker. The mailman's experience just described is the exception rather than the rule. Even more exceptional is the following story (so exceptional indeed that it sounds like a 'story' rather than a relation of true events, even though it was presented as the latter). Told by an old man and his wife to Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats and Miss Pollexfen in the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland some time during the first twenty years of this century, they were speaking of a time many years before, when they were only recently married. Mr Kelleher said: 'It was in the winter and there was snow on the ground, and I saw one of them outside, and I brought him in and put him on the dresser, and he stopped in the house for a while, for about a week.' Mrs Kelleher interrupted, saying it was more like two or three weeks; then her husband continued, saying:

He was about fifteen inches high. He was very friendly. It is likely he slept on the dresser at night. When the boys at the public-house were full of porter, they used to come to the house to look at him, and they would laugh to see him but I never let them hurt him. ... One day I saw another of the kind not far from the house, but more like a girl and the clothes greyer than his clothes, that were red. And that evening when I was sitting beside the fire with the Missus I told her about it, and the little lad that was sitting on the dresser called out, 'That's Geoffrey-a-wee that's coming for me,' and he jumped down and went

out of the door and I never saw him again. I thought it was a girl I saw, but Geoffrey wouldn't be the name of a girl, would it? He had never spoken before that time. Somehow I think that he liked me better than the Missus. I used to feed him with bread and milk.

He added that he used to feed him with a spoon, putting the spoon to his mouth. Mrs Kelleher added a description of the creature: 'He was fresh-looking at the first, but after a while he got an old look, a sort of wrinkled look. He was wearing a red cap and a little red cloth skirt. He had a little short coat above that; it was checked and trousers under the skirt and long stockings all red.'¹³ Red clothing is often described by those who have seen the Little People, green apparently being the next most popular colour. The significance of the popularity of red, if there is any, is not clear, but green is a colour of nature, and may relate to the creatures' role as guardians of nature, a topic to be more fully considered in Chapter 6.

In 1928 Mrs G.M. Herbert described how, as a seven-year-old girl in 1897, she had seen a 'pixy' on Dartmoor in Devon.

Though I am a grown woman with three sons, I still firmly believe in pixies and in fairies. When a child of seven I saw a pixie, and in recent years I have been 'pisky-led' on Dartmoor.

I saw the pixie under an overhanging boulder closer to Shaugh Bridge (on the southern edge of Dartmoor) in the afternoon. I cannot say more definitely as to the time, but I remember running in to my mother after an afternoon walk and saying I had seen a pixie – and being laughed at. This was in 1897.

It was like a little wizened man about (as far as I can remember) 18 inches or possibly 2 feet high, but I incline to the lesser height. It had a little pointed hat, slightly curved to the front, a doublet, and little short knicker things. My impression is of some contrasting colours, but I cannot remember what colours, though I think they were blue and red. Its face was brown and wrinkled and wizened. I saw it for a moment and it vanished. It was under the boulder when I looked, and then it vanished.¹⁴

Although the fairies are generally seen in groups, they do also sometimes appear alone, as this one did. In the following account, too, one solitary fairy was seen. The details were told in 1959 by Jeannie Robertson, grand-daughter of the lady who had the experience, some time in the late nineteenth century I would guess. Aged sixteen or seventeen,

she was walking one night through a cornfield somewhere in Scotland, intending to take some corn back to her hungry horse, when she noticed a beautifully dressed 'little lady' jumping from stook to stook. After seeing it she felt unable to steal any of the corn; and indeed the fairy's role may have been to guard the cornfield.¹⁵

Finally, two Irish accounts dating from some time in the nineteenth century, and both involving horses, though the animals in the first tale were fairy horses. The activity of the first group demonstrates the fairies' close affinity to humans, even to enjoying the same kind of sports. A County Clare man told folk-lorist Lady Gregory:

I saw them myself one night I was going to Ennis with a load of straw. It was when we came to Bunnahow and the moon was shining, and I was on the top of the load of straw, and I saw them in a field. Just like jockeys they were, and riding horses, red clothes and caps they had like a jockey would have, but they were small. They had a screen of bushes put up in the field and some of the horses would jump over it, and more of them would baulk when they'd be put to it. The men that were with me didn't see them, they were walking in the road, but they heard the sound of the horses.¹⁶

In his book *Ghostland*, ghost-hunter Elliott O'Donnell described an encounter experienced by a relative of his near Ballynanty in County Limerick.

The horse had come to a dead stop, and was standing still, shivering, whilst the roadside was crowded with a number of tiny shadowy figures that were surging round the car trying to drag the unfortunate driver, who was quite frantic with terror, from his seat. Mr. B., however, concluding that what he saw could only be the fairies ... of whose existence he had hitherto been very skeptical, seized the reins and urged the horse forward. Meanwhile his servant seemed to be still paralysed with fright, and it was not until they were well out of sight that the man found himself once again in possession of his tongue and normal faculties ... Then he described what had befallen him ... He was driving along quite all right, till the horse suddenly stopped, and when he looked down to see what was the cause of it, he perceived a crowd of fairies, who rushed at him, and tried to drag him off the car. He said their touch was so cold it benumbed him. But by praying hard he held on. The cause of the attack was apparent.

‘It was all because we came on them, sorr, when they were dancing. They won’t be disturbed when they are at their revels and enjoying themselves. Had they got me down into the road, maybe I should have lost my sight or my hearing or the use of my limbs, and in any case my soul.’¹⁷

From this round-up of pre-1900 accounts, certain patterns have begun to emerge, and it will be interesting to see if those same patterns are also evident in the twentieth-century accounts which follow in the next chapter. The predominant one is that the witness is usually alone, usually out at night, usually in a detached frame of mind which is more receptive to supernatural happenings. When two companions witness the events together, perhaps one will become aware of the fairies first, and his signalling of their presence to the other will trigger a parallel vision, or shared hallucination. Although probably rare, such an event is not impossible, especially if the two have entered a similar receptive frame of mind by reason of their present circumstances and close harmony at that time. The experience described by Mr Kermode in the Isle of Man would seem to fit this description.

Another emerging pattern is in the creatures’ behaviour. They are often described as dancing, or performing antics of some kind in the open air. This described behaviour recurs so often that such accounts have the ring of truth to my ear; though I am at a loss to explain why the fairies should so much enjoy dancing at night. Perhaps it is simply that they enjoy it and will take every opportunity to relax in this way; perhaps they are performing rituals of some kind, in a similar way to the witches, who for centuries have been in the habit of congregating at lonely places by night. Perhaps witches have on occasion been mistaken for fairies, and vice versa. The descriptions of fairies dancing sometimes recall the folk dancing still performed so enthusiastically throughout Britain today, especially the so-called Morris dancing whose origins are shrouded in mystery. It is not inconceivable that people centuries ago copied fairy dancing, and adapted it over the years to produce the performances we see today. Certainly the fairies seen by the Reverend Dr Williams and his childhood friends in North Wales seem to have had some similarity in their dancing to modern-day folk dancers.

Perhaps if we were all psychic, and not so preoccupied with the trivia of our lives, we would all see fairies very often and so would be able to

establish some kind of relationship with them, whereby we could learn who they really are, and what they are about. Some people claim frequent sightings, and even have talked with them, as we shall hear in the next two chapters. Perhaps the fairies are indeed, as one of Lady Gregory's informants suggested, 'all about us as thick as grass'.¹⁸

3

‘Little figures dressed in brown’

Reports from Great Britain and Ireland during the twentieth century

EVEN IN OUR modern age, when science and technology have ostensibly taken over from superstition and irrationality, people still continue to see the Little People – and the Little People are still dancing. Some time before 1945, as dowser J. Foot White wrote:

Some years ago I was one of a party invited to spend the afternoon on the lovely slopes of Oxeford Hill, in the County of Dorset. The absence of both trees and hedges in this locality enables one to see without obstruction for long distances. I was walking with my companion, who lives in the locality, some little distance from the main party, when to my astonishment I saw a number of what I thought to be very small children, about a score in number, and all dressed in little gaily-coloured short skirts, their legs being bare. Their hands were joined, and all held up, as they merrily danced round in a perfect circle. We stood watching them, when in an instant they all vanished from our sight. My companion told me they were fairies, and they often came to that particular part to hold their revels. It may be our presence disturbed them.¹

Also in the early part of the century, and again in Dorset, a Mr Lonsdale saw the Little People dancing in a garden on the Branksome Park estate, Bournemouth.

Suddenly I was conscious of a movement on the edge of the lawn ... I saw several little figures dressed in brown peering through the bushes ... in a few seconds a dozen or more small people about two feet in height, in bright clothes and with radiant faces, ran on to the lawn, dancing hither and thither ... this continued for four or five minutes. They were frightened away by a servant bringing tea.²

Nor does bad weather inhibit the Little People. W.E. Thorner described how on the island of Hoy (Orkney Islands), during the Second World War, he saw ‘wild men’ dancing in a storm. He was battling his way along a windy clifftop at Torness, with misty rain swirling around him, when he saw ‘a dozen or more “wild men” dancing about, to and fro ...’

These creatures were small in stature, but they did not have long noses nor did they appear kindly in demeanour. They possessed round faces, sallow in complexion, with long, dark, bedraggled hair. As they danced about, seeming to throw themselves over the cliff edge, I felt that I was a witness to some ritual dance of a tribe of primitive men. It is difficult to describe in a few words my feelings at this juncture or my bewilderment. The whole sequence could have lasted about three minutes until I was able to leave the cliff edge.³

Orkney-woman Bessie Skea also wrote of little men (‘trows’) seen on various Orkney islands. She saw one herself, and so did her mother-in-law when a girl. Coming home from school, she and her brother saw ‘a small man sitting on the dyke in front of the house. He wore a long grey beard and he was nobody either of them had ever seen before. They were terrified, and went around the back of the house to avoid passing him.’⁴

In her *Dictionary of Fairies*, Katharine Briggs comments that there are constant references to the fairies as dancers from the sixteenth century onwards, and she adds that all types of Little People seem to enjoy dancing, from the tiny, beautiful fairies to the ugly dwarfs.⁵ The above quotations illustrate this point very clearly, with the beautiful Dorset fairies and the Orkney ‘wild men’. However, it is not only dancing that they enjoy – sometimes they seem to be simply playing around – but whatever they are doing, energetic movement is involved. One theory is that a leaping movement, as in dancing and gambolling, produces energy which helps the crops to grow. Ancient crop-growth rituals employed by human beings in past ages included skipping and dancing.⁶ Perhaps the dancing fairies are in this way performing their role of encouraging the growth of plants by energizing the land.

Some areas seem to be known as haunts of the Little People, though why they should prefer some places and not others is not immediately obvious. W.M. Thomas recorded how, in the early 1960s, he had been exploring Mynydd Llangynidir near Brecon (Powys) and had got talking to an old farmer, who told him that one day he had allowed two amateur botanists to

camp in the nearby field while they were collecting specimens on the mountain. The farmer talked to them whenever he passed by, and one day came upon them arguing. One of the men insisted that he had seen 'hordes of tiny people playing' around the spot where they were hunting for plants. They were tiny men and women, and he described their clothes. His companion did not believe him, for he had seen nothing. When they showed the farmer on the map where the spot was, he translated the Welsh name for them: Fairies Bog.⁷

Dancing and other fairy activity of a similar kind could be taking place throughout Britain even now, but generally unseen by human eyes. Despite the fact that parts of Britain are very densely populated, large areas are not, except by sheep, and the Little People could be happily going about their business in the remote areas, never seen by human beings. Also, of course, if they are largely invisible, only psychic humans are going to see them in any case: if you were not psychic and so not 'tuned in to their wavelength', you might pass close to a group of fairies dancing in a field, but not suspect anything.

If invisibility were not enough, further concealment may be achieved by restricting their forays in the open to the night-time, so that even in populated areas they could dance largely unseen. Most people are asleep at the dead of night; only people such as policemen are abroad. Sometimes they do see strange things: on 10 August 1977 a police constable on early morning patrol saw three figures dancing in a field, who disappeared as he approached. As reported in the *Hull Daily Mail*, PC David Swift first saw 'a bank of fog' on playing fields near Stonebridge Avenue, East Hull (Humberside), and then three dancing figures he thought must be drunks. As he got nearer, however, they disappeared into thin air. He described one of the figures as 'a man dressed in a sleeveless jerkin, with tight-fitting trousers'; the other two figures were women 'wearing bonnets, shawls and white dresses'. All had an arm raised as if dancing round an invisible maypole.

Ten years later, in September 1987, several different people including policemen experienced strange happenings at Pearoyd Bridge, Stocksbridge, near Sheffield (South Yorkshire), including seeing ghostly figures. Among these was a group of (apparently) young children seen playing around a large electricity pylon just after midnight. The witnesses drove past and stopped close by. Examining the ground round the pylon,

they found no footprints in the fresh mud.⁸ Children were unlikely to be playing outdoors so late at night, especially children who left no tracks, and the figures seen could easily have been Little People.

Fairies engaged in dancing and gambolling are almost always in groups – sometimes just a few individuals, sometimes large numbers of them – but the Little People do appear singly, and there are numerous reports of them being seen alone. Mr W.S. Jones, for example, was a boy of eight or nine in the late 1920s, living at Llanystumdwy on the Llyn Peninsula of Gwynedd, North Wales, when he saw a ‘little old fellow’ in a circle of trees. The boy was collecting firewood and smoking an illicit cigarette in an orchard near the village, when he saw the little man coming out of some bushes. He was about three feet tall, green from the waist down, and wearing a red cap. Nothing was said, and Mr Jones didn’t remember the little man leaving, but he was quite sure that he had not imagined the incident: ‘It was there, sure enough, that little old fellow.’⁹

Mr E.J.A. Reynolds of London was evacuated to Horsham in Sussex during the war, and in 1948, aged ten, he was staying there during the school summer holidays. He described what he saw one moonlit night when out setting rabbit traps:

I decided to sit still and watch, being young I thought that the rabbits would come out and I could see them being trapped. As I sat still and waited I suddenly realised that a small hairy man had stepped out from a blackberry bush. He was no more than eighteen inches high and covered in hair. His face was bare but had a leathery look. The nose seemed sharp. I noticed it when it turned away in profile. It definitely had hands. Its arms seemed longer than a human being’s. I did not notice his feet. It was definitely substantial, real. It did not notice me, or if it did it did not show it. It turned and disappeared back into the blackberry bush. When I told the couple I was staying with they laughed at me.

A few days later Mr Reynolds saw the creature again when travelling upstairs on a bus. This was during the daytime, and in a different location in Horsham. He saw the little man walking across the lawn in a large garden.¹⁰

Only a few years later, in June 1952, Mrs C. Woods saw a little old man three or four feet tall on Dartmoor, Devon. He wore a brown smock tied round the waist with a cord. His legs were covered in a brown material,

and he wore a flat brown cap or had brown hair. Mrs Woods was walking on Haytor with her son on a hot summer's day, and she went off alone, climbing up the stony path, where she saw a little man who seemed to be watching her. When she was forty yards away he turned and went behind a boulder. She fetched her son and together they went back to look for the man, but they found nothing: no-little man, no hole, nowhere he could have hidden.¹¹

Near St Asaph in Denbighshire, North Wales, in 1961, a man walking his dog had an eerie encounter with a little man only three feet tall. The witness tapped his muddy walking stick several times on a metal road sign, at which the little man appeared beside it, almost as if the tapping had summoned him – or maybe he was displeased with the disturbance made by the tapping, because the witness felt a malevolent air about the creature, who had a very ugly brown face and was dressed all in green. The dog also felt ill-at-ease, for he growled and raised his hackles. The little man suddenly disappeared after only a short while.¹²

Children's author Mary Tredgold saw a tiny man about eighteen inches tall when she was on a bus on the island of Mull, in Scotland.

My bus drew into a lay-by and I looked idly at an expanse of peat outside the window. This tiny young man was standing beside a clump of tallish heather with his foot on a spade. He was wearing blue dungarees and a very white shirt. He made me think of a leprechaun. He wasn't a vision from the past because he was wearing contemporary dress; and a mirage would have had to come from a long way away because there was a blizzard and he was in his shirt sleeves.

During this century, the largest number of sighting reports has come from Ireland, where the fairy tradition has lingered longest.

Here are four separate accounts from that country of single fairies being seen, starting with a nine-year-old boy who was bathing with friends in the River Moy at Foxford, County Mayo. This sighting took place at the beginning of the century: the boy later graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, and was an army officer in the First World War. On that hot summer's day, the boy was strolling home with a friend, when he saw a little figure dodge behind a big boulder. Going to look, they saw a little man about four feet tall, wearing a collarless black coat buttoned up to his chin, and a cap that covered his hair. He had a flat face and curly brown

whiskers across his chin from ear to ear. He stood grinning at them, but this did not calm the boys' fear: they ran away as fast as they could.¹³

Also apparently unconcerned about finding himself close to a human being was the 4½-foot tall fairy seen by a nine-year-old girl living at Cranagh near Borris in County Carlow, who on that memorable November afternoon early this century was fetching her father's cows home. When she got to the field and was waiting for the cows to come through the gate, she saw the little man, moving quickly in front of a cow. The beast tossed its head, whereupon the little man tapped it lightly on the nose with a switch of wood he was carrying. The girl saw that he had on a bright red coat, buttoned up, tight buff trousers, and a close-fitting black cap turned up at the front. As he came past her, almost touching, the fairy looked at her, then stepped across a ditch and disappeared into a grassy bank, walking into the earth as though it was no barrier, but only a door. Which, of course, for him it may have been. There are other reports in existence of the Little People seen apparently walking through 'solid' objects.¹⁴

Also in County Carlow, a 'wee red man' was seen about thirty-five years later at Dunroe, not far away from Cranagh. John Byrne was moving a large bush with a bulldozer in November 1959 when the three-foot-tall man ran out from underneath it. Three other men who were present also saw him, as he ran across the field and over the fence. Under the bushes the men found a large flagstone which appeared to be covering a hole. They tried to move the stone, but could not shift it, even using gelignite, which failed to explode. Finally the farmer removed his machinery and stopped work on the site.¹⁵

A few years earlier, in 1951, a little man dressed in black was seen by two girls walking along a country lane in County Wicklow. When they first saw him he was standing in the road close to an old thorn tree, looking at them. They stopped, amazed, and gazed back at him. They later described him as two to three feet tall, youngish looking, and dressed all in black with a black cap. Realizing he must be a fairy, they opened a gate into a field and ran inside, closing the gate behind them before running across the field. Looking back, they couldn't see the little man, but they did notice something strange, about the size and shape of a kitchen clock, on the top bar of the gate. What this might have been is anyone's guess.¹⁶

The sightings continue to the present day. Quite recently, probably in the early 1990s, fifteen-year-old Brian Collins was on holiday in the Aran

Islands off west Donegal. While out walking early one morning he saw two little men fishing from a bank overlooking the sea. They were about 3½ feet tall, dressed in green and with brown boots. One had a grey beard and a flat hat. They were laughing and talking in Irish, and suddenly they jumped over the bank. When Brian went to look for them, they had gone, but they had left a pipe behind. He took it back to the house where he was staying, but while there it disappeared from a locked drawer. When Brian saw the little men again, he tried to photograph them and tape-record their conversation, but nothing came out.¹⁷

It seems obvious that sightings of the Little People should happen outdoors, as they seem to be creatures of the natural world – and it is true that most first-hand accounts do describe creatures seen in an outdoor environment – but just occasionally, people have seen them indoors. The fairies are usually alone, and the witnesses are usually children, like the six-year-old who awoke in the middle of the night to see a ‘little man’. ‘He had no decided clothing on but to me he looked grey all over. He had no age in his appearance, but looked more like a gnome. He had in his hands a great big ball of knitting wool, which seemed to unravel as he backed away across the bedroom and down the stairs. I never saw him again.’¹⁸

The girl who saw a fairy in the fireplace of her home in Wandsworth, London, was of a similar age, more precisely five, and the events took place probably early in the twentieth century. She was practising her dancing steps in the drawing room when she suddenly noticed a little figure sitting in the fireplace. He was just over half her size, dressed in green, and wearing a red ‘jelly-bag’ hat. As she knelt down and went to lift him up, he smiled, nodded his head, and then suddenly disappeared.¹⁹

In 1909 a pair of nine-year-old twin boys, playing alone in Rosehaugh House near Avoch on Scotland’s Black Isle, saw two little men as they climbed the main staircase. The men were coming downstairs, and walked straight past the boys, disappearing into the hall below. About eighteen inches tall, they wore ‘loose tunics and small pointed hats’. They had grey hair and beards. Some time later, a strange bootlace was found. It was a leather strip with no metal fasteners.²⁰ Also in Scotland, a troop of fairies was once seen in a house on Iona. A Norwegian visitor to the island first saw them outdoors; they were about twelve inches tall, and she felt they needed spiritual help, so she gave them a blessing. That evening she saw them again, in a house on the island called Grianan, where they appeared in

the so-called Faery Room. They had brought a cross made of twigs and bark, and she believed that this showed they had accepted Christianity.²¹

That case is an example of interaction between the Little People and humans. Interaction does not always occur, and if it does, it is usually only slight: the fairy may look at the witness, or even smile, but rarely speaks. The fairy may flee as the witness approaches, but rarely attacks. However there are a few accounts which describe more definite interaction, like these two from Ireland where the fairies spoke – but only to show disapproval of the witnesses. A farmer from the Mournes described his 1951 sighting in these words:

I seen a fairy myself. We were out on a Sunday evening and up on the ditches – you know what young fellows would be – pulling these haws. Well, I was the smallest – I was only a little tot – and these other bigger fellows was up on this thorn tree just after sunset on a Sunday evening and they were breaking branches with their hands and throwing them down to me. Well, this wee man came at the bottom of the tree and he shouts ‘Come down out o’ that! Come down out o’ that! Come down out o’ that!’ – and I shouts up, ‘Holy Murder – there’s a fairy!’ And they came down and there was no fairy to be seen. He was gone, and they would make me believe it wasn’t so, but I seen the man, a wee man there in a big broad hat on him – that’s the God in Heaven’s truth – I see it to this day yet!²²

This creature clearly objected to the fairy thorn being damaged. The one John Keely spoke to in 1938 was clearly not about to reveal any secrets. Schoolboy Keely was walking along a road in the west of County Limerick when he met the fairy. He ran to tell his friends, who suggested he go back and speak to it. In fact they were probably joking, and did not believe he had seen any such thing. But Keely did go back, and asked the fairy where he came from, to which the little man replied: ‘I’m from the mountains and it’s all equal to you what my business is.’ Next day, two fairies were seen skipping at a crossroads between Ballingarry and Kilfinney; John Keely went up to them and held the hand of one. He walked off with them, and Keely might have found himself a kidnap victim, had not the Little People seen his friends hiding in the bushes, and taken flight. The fairies were described as about two feet tall, with ‘hard, hairy faces’ and no ears. They were dressed in red, wore knee breeches, and one had a white cape. Despite being chased through hedges, ditches and marshland, they looked

neat and clean.²³

Sometimes the fairies find themselves rather too close to human beings for comfort and, as in the previous case, they run away. The Limerick creatures, though smaller than their pursuers, nevertheless outpaced them *and* stayed neat and clean, suggesting there was definitely something supernatural about them. The tiny fairy who strayed too close to a woman in Gloucestershire early this century found himself in an awkward dilemma, if we can believe this strange tale.

I was staying at an old house in Gloucester, and the garden at the back ended in the forest of Birdlip Beeches which covers part of the Cotswold Hills. It was before the days of the ‘shingle’, and I had washed my hair and was drying it in the sunshine in the forest, out of sight of the house. Suddenly, I felt something tugging at my hair and I turned to look.

A most extraordinary sight met my eyes. He was about nine inches high, and the most dreadfully ugly, dreadfully misshapen, most wrinkled and tiniest mannikin I have ever seen.

He was the colour of dead aspen leaves, sort of yellow brown – with a high, squeaky voice. He was caught in the strands of my hair. He was struggling to escape, and he grumbled and complained all the time, telling me I had no right to be there, troubling honest folk, and, that I might have strangled him with my hair. Finally, he freed himself and disappeared.

I mentioned my experience afterwards to a professor of Bristol University. He was not surprised and told me that Birdlip Beeches was one of the few places left where there were fairies, and no one could go there because of it.²⁴

Very different, but in some ways even stranger, are the following events which took place around 1910 on the island of Muck off the Scottish west coast. The Reverend Alexander Fraser had the tale from an elder in his church, who was also a lobster fisherman. Two boys, aged ten and seven, were looking for driftwood on the seashore one morning, and found a tin which they tried to open by hitting it with a big stone. As they were thus engaged, two tiny boys dressed in green appeared, and asked what they were doing. The fairies spoke in English, but could also speak equally good Gaelic, and they asked the boys about their home and family. The boys saw a tiny boat lying just offshore, with a tiny woman and a rat-sized dog on board. The woman, who was also dressed in green, invited them to come and take tea, but the boys refused. So she gave them some loaves of

bread, as big as a walnut, which they ate and enjoyed. Then the fairies left, saying, 'We will not be coming back here any more; but others of our race will be coming.' The boys were found by their sister sitting by the shore and gazing out to sea. When she spoke, the spell was broken, and they immediately became fearful, though before they had felt happy.²⁵

Some of the Little People seem to have ghost-like qualities: they walk through solid objects, and they seemingly disappear into thin air. Some reports emphasize these features, and it is then difficult to decide whether the being seen was indeed a fairy or 'merely' a ghost. In Ireland, earlier this century, a teenage girl who had come over from England to help her aunt to look after her children, saw a little man about four feet tall in the house. One of the little girls had seen him standing by her cot, and had called out. As they both stared at him, he vanished. Afterwards the older girl described him as wearing a green hat without a brim, a close-fitting green coat, yellowish waistcoat and cravat, buff knee breeches, grey woollen stockings, and brogues. He had blue eyes, brown hair, and no beard. She saw him again a few weeks later, just before her return to England. Her uncle, Colonel Henry Jordan, told an old man who worked on the estate about the little man, and he recalled having seen him himself many years before, when he was young. He had been smoking his pipe in a field near the big house. He spoke to the little man in English and Irish, but on getting no reply, he cursed him angrily – at which the little man vanished. When he told his tale in the kitchen afterwards, one of the maids claimed to see the figure often.²⁶

Very different was the ghostly old hag seen on a footpath near Pittentian Farm, Crieff (Scotland), some time in the 1980s. Four children, a dog, and an adult, Margaret Mills, were walking along the path one Sunday afternoon when they saw an old lady coming towards them. Alarmingly, she had no feet, and began to disappear as they watched, from the legs upwards. They also heard her speak, and she seemed to be saying 'tee-hee'. This was later interpreted as 'taigh shidhe', or fairy house, and Pittentian itself means 'place of the fairies' or 'fairy mound'. If the interpretation of the ghost's words is correct, she demonstrates clearly what has in other cases only been hinted at: a link between two apparently separate types of being, ghosts and fairies.

So far the Little People have not been particularly little, averaging about three to four feet tall; occasionally smaller creatures have been described.

Yet some really tiny fairies are seen on occasions, like the one that got caught in the girl's hair. Here are a few more. Marjorie T. Johnson of Nottingham described in 1936 a childhood experience:

The house in which I then lived was surrounded by a beautiful garden and orchard, and was near woods and fields in a lonely part of Nottingham. On this particular morning I was lying in bed enjoying the early morning sunshine which streamed in through the low, open window, when suddenly I felt compelled to sit up in bed and turn my eyes to the empty firegrate. There, on a filmy cobweb on the bars, sat a strange little creature. It seemed quite unafraid and, from the broad grin on its face, appeared to enjoy my observation. At first I just kept still and stared, and it blinked back at me with a blank expression which showed very little intelligence. Soon I had to satisfy my childish curiosity by climbing out of bed. The elf immediately disappeared. I climbed back, and when I turned round it was perched in the same place. This disappearance and reappearance continued until I brushed away the cobweb. I never saw the nature-sprite again.

I should say it was from 4in. to 6in. in height; its ears were very large, and its body was of a glimmering green colour ...²⁷

Violet Tweedale saw a similar creature around 1915, while walking in Devon. She noticed a swaying leaf of wild iris.

Expecting to see a field mouse astride it, I stepped very softly up to it. What was my delight to see a tiny green man. He was about five inches long ... I had a vision of a merry little face and something red in the form of a cap on the head. For a full minute he remained in view, swinging on the leaf. Then he vanished.²⁸

This account was published in an article on fairies by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, in the 1920s, was intrigued by fairy lore and along with fellow enthusiast Edward L. Gardner took a close interest in the Cottingley fairy photographs (which will be described more fully in Chapter 6). Some of Gardner's correspondents sent him details of their own fairy sightings, of which the following two accounts are just a sample. It is interesting to note that the photographs of the Cottingley fairies show the tiny, diaphanous kind, and these are the ones with which Gardner concerned himself. His writings contain no mention of the larger, more earthy and human-looking

ones, although they are in fact more commonly seen. He was wholly concerned with ‘nature spirits’, and the questions arise: Are these tiny fairies the same as the three to four-foot tall beings? Do different people see the fairies differently, or are there several distinct categories of Little People? This tricky question will be tackled again in Chapter 6. Meanwhile, here are two first-hand accounts of sightings of tiny fairies. The first is from the Reverend Arnold J. Holmes, of the Isle of Man.

The startling phenomena occurred on my journey from Peel Town at night to St Mark’s (where I was Incumbent).

After passing Sir Hall Caine’s beautiful residence, Greeba Castle, my horse – a spirited one – suddenly stopped dead, and looking ahead I saw amid the obscure light and misty moonbeams what appeared to be a small army of indistinct figures – very small, clad in gossamer garments. They appeared to be perfectly happy, scampering and tripping along the road, having come from the direction of the beautiful sylvan glen of Greeba and St Trinian’s Roofless Church. The legend is that it has ever been the fairies’ haunt, and when an attempt has been made on two occasions to put a roof on, the fairies have removed all the work during the night, and for a century no further attempts have been made. It has therefore been left to the ‘little people’ who claim it as their own.

I watched spellbound, my horse half mad with fear. The little happy army then turned in the direction of Witch’s Hill, and mounted a mossy bank; one ‘little man’ of larger stature than the rest, about fourteen inches high, stood at attention until all had passed him dancing, singing, with happy abandon, across the Valley fields towards St John’s Mount.²⁹

Mrs Rose of Southend-on-Sea told Gardner:

I think I have always seen fairies. I see them constantly here in the shrubbery by the sea. They congregate under the trees and float around about the trees, and gnomes come around to protect them. The gnomes are like little old men, with little green caps, and their clothes are generally neutral green. The fairies themselves are in light draperies. I have also seen them in the conservatory of my house, floating about among the flowers and plants. The fairies appear to be perpetually playing, excepting when they go to rest on the turf or in a tree, and I once saw a group of gnomes standing on each other’s shoulders like gymnasts on the stage. They seem to be living as much as I am. It is not imagination. I have seen the gnomes arranging a sort of moss bed for the

fairies, just like a mother-bird putting her chicks to bed. I don't hear any sounds from the gnomes or fairies, but they always look happy, as if they were having a real good time.³⁰

The tiny creatures seen among the flowers and plants may be the nature spirits Edward L. Gardner describes in his book *Fairies*:

The life of the nature spirit, nearly the lowest or outermost of all, is active in woodland, meadow and garden, in fact with vegetation everywhere, for its function is to furnish the vital connecting link between the stimulating energy of the sun and the raw material of the form-to-be. The growth of a plant from a seed, which we regard as the 'natural' result of its being placed in a warm and moist soil, could not happen unless nature's builders played their part. Just as music from an organ is not produced by merely bringing wind-pressure and a composer's score together, but needs also the vital link supplied by the organist, so must nature's craftsmen be present, to weave and convert the constituents of the soil into the structure of a plant.

The normal working body of the fairy sprites, used when they are engaged in assisting growth processes, is not of the human nor of any other definite form, and herein lies the explanation of much that has been puzzling concerning fairies and their kin. They have no clear-cut shape and their working bodies can be described only as clouds of colour, rather hazy, somewhat luminous, with a bright spark-like nucleus ... Although the nature spirit must be regarded as irresponsible, living seemingly a gladsome, joyous and untroubled life, with an eager enjoyment of its work, it occasionally leaves that work and steps out of the plant, as it were, and instantly changes its shape into that of a diminutive human being, not necessarily then visible to ordinary sight but quite near to the range of visibility. Assumed in a flash, it may disappear as quickly.³¹

Two accounts follow from people who were lucky enough to see nature spirits during some of their brief appearances in human form. Cynthia Montefiore of Somerset wrote in 1977:

I was in the garden with my mother at her home... when this occurred. Mother wanted to show me the correct way to take cuttings from rose trees. She stood behind the finest rose tree we had with a pair of scissors in her hand, while I stood in front of it. Thus we faced one another with the rose tree between us.

Suddenly Mother put a finger to her lips to indicate silence and then pointed to

one of the blooms. With astonishment I saw what she was seeing – a little figure about six inches high, in the perfect shape of a woman and with brilliantly coloured diaphanous wings resembling those of a dragonfly. The figure held a little wand and was pointing it at the heart of a rose. At the tip of the wand there was a little light, like a star. The figure's limbs were a very pale pink and visible through her clothes. She had long silvery hair which resembled an aura. She hovered near the rose for at least two minutes, her wings vibrating rapidly like those of a hummingbird, and then she disappeared.

'You saw that, didn't you?' asked my mother. I nodded and we both went back to the house astonished and enriched by our mutual experience and having forgotten entirely our rose-cutting.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the experience was the way in which the little creature we both saw corresponded in practically every detail to the archetypal fairy of folklore and nursery stories. I know now that these descriptions are firmly founded on reality.

This was proved to me once again by a second experience I had when I was alone in the same garden. I was sitting reading under a tree when my eye was caught by a sudden movement in front of me. A little figure, about 18 inches tall, ran from the lawn on my left, across a path and onto another lawn, finally disappearing under a young fir tree. The sturdily built figure seemed to be dressed in a brown one-piece suit. I was not able to see the face because it was turned away from me. I immediately jumped up to investigate the area around the fir tree but there was no longer any sign of this gnome.

Not long after this episode a man friend of the family, who was obliging my mother by digging in the vegetable garden, saw the selfsame gnome and described it to me ...³²

A friend of mine also saw a nature spirit in a rose garden. Sylvia Pigeon was cutting roses in her garden in Hampshire when she looked down and saw a figure on the ground. 'It was all sort of greenish, and light – light, airy – and I have a vague recollection of seeing a little sort of face of some kind, but I have no recollection of any limbs, any arms or any legs, but it was round in some way, and moving, very sort of carefully, almost as though it was looking where it was going.' It was about twelve to eighteen inches tall, 'misty and leaflike ... it really seemed to me to be a spirit of the roses, and there were some draperies about it, but it was more like petals, you know, curved and intertwined, and flowing.' At the time she saw the

creature, Mrs Pigeon was thinking about the imminent wedding of her daughter, and the beauty of the roses, and she felt that somehow the appearance of the creature, the wedding and the roses were all linked. She felt 'love and compassion' coming from the creature, that it was 'looking at me with some delight, I would say, some sort of love, friendliness, as though to say yes, how nice it all is, all friends together, I had a feeling of friendliness and love really.'³³

Other people's accounts suggest that nature spirits do not necessarily have to be tiny, nor do they always appear in human form. In addition, even though they may be performing the sort of tasks expected of nature spirits, they do not necessarily consider themselves to *be* nature spirits! 'Confusing' is a mild way of describing the information that is coming out of the accounts, but it is only fair to let them speak for themselves, and then later to try and sort them out. Some witnesses claim to have spoken with nature spirits. One such was a man who wrote in the magazine *The Ley Hunter* under the name Circumlibra. In 1973 he wrote:

The incident which has prompted this story took place one delightful day when the trees and all things growing were at their best, a day when it was grand to be alive. I climbed the steep hill from the bridge, out of sight of the busy main road which traverses the floor of the valley, [and] passed by the few houses which are Alderwasley [Derbyshire]. Here the lane is less steep and just above the houses it makes a bit of a twist for no apparent reason which has always intrigued me, and so on this occasion I climbed the stile at this point.

I noticed a slight mound on the hillside and went across to investigate. It told me nothing, and being such a delightful day I chose a spot on the grassy bank to relax. Soon I became aware of a presence beside me and turning saw a rather strange looking creature, a dumpy little chap less than four feet from the ground to the tip of his pointed hat, everything the same colour as the grass which grows around. I was neither disturbed nor excited, just curious to know more about him for he was the first of his kind I had met.

I felt there was a reason for his appearance and perhaps he had a message to deliver. He had, and so we carried on a short conversation. Well, we will call it conversing, but more likely it was an exchange of thoughts which were fully understood by each of us. I gathered his work was in breaking down decaying materials into food for plants. We spoke of other things also but what impressed me most was his assertion that he was a man, a human being, when I thought he

was an elemental or nature spirit.³⁴

Scotsman R. Ogilvie Crombie (Roc) has also communicated with nature spirits, both at the Findhorn garden and in Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens. One day in March 1966 he saw a half animal, half human creature in the botanic garden: it was three feet tall, had cloven hoofs, gave its name as Kurmos, and told Roc that it helped the trees to grow. Roc took Kurmos back to his flat in the city; and later saw it again in the garden, Kurmos coming when Roc called. The two talked together during their meetings, and it later revealed itself to be the god Pan.³⁵

One explanation of these strange experiences is that Roc had an affinity with nature's energy and was thus able to perceive and even to communicate with life-forms not visible to most other people. Those people who are lucky enough to see fairies not just once but often are likewise more sensitive than most of us to emanations passing through the invisible curtain which seems to separate us from the world where the Little People live. Scotsman Struan Robertson had several encounters with the fairies, as he described in 1936.

The first fairy I met was alone upon a hillside near Aberfoyle, where Robert Kirk wrote his *Commonwealth of Fairies*. She was very friendly, beckoned me to follow her, and eventually showed me the most wonderful of sights. [Unfortunately Robertson does not expand on this. It would have been interesting to know exactly what he saw.]

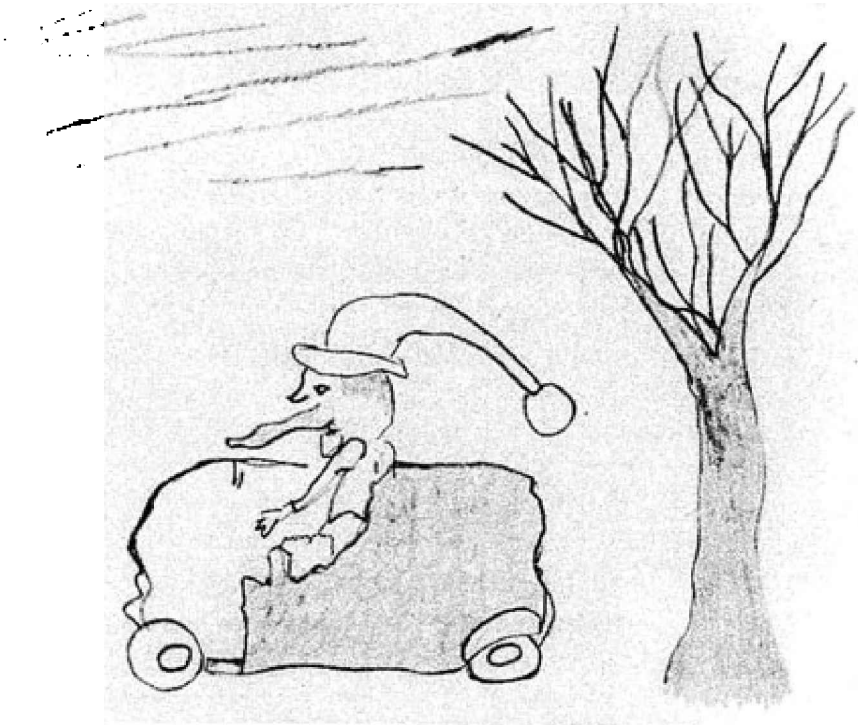
One afternoon in Arran I saw ten fairies playing out and in among gorse bushes and round about the grazing sheep. The sheep were quite undisturbed except that if a fairy went too near one of them it would trot off for a few yards.

Wandering in a wood in Arran one morning I heard the silvery, plangent accents of fairies, and following the sounds I saw quite a clan of them hurrying along a green footpath. They seemed angry about something. Observing me, they chattered loudly, scattered as one sees a flock of excited sparrows scattering, increased their speed and fled.

Tramping near Loch Rannoch I was attracted by tuneful tones coming from clumps of rhododendrons, and advancing cautiously beheld the most beautiful dancing. I was too interested to count the number of fairies, concentrating upon how close I could get. When I was within ten paces of them one sighted me, and alarming the dancers she shepherded them in among the bushes. I shall never forget the glance she gave me as she disappeared, and the gesture, the grace of

her exit, I have seen approached only by the incomparable Pavlova herself.³⁶

I have saved until last the most intriguing and detailed encounter with the Little People that has occurred in recent years. The witnesses were a small group of about four children, aged eight to ten, and the events took place in September 1979 in Wollaton Park, Nottingham. They were in the park grounds at 8.30 p.m., when it was getting dark but there was still some light to see by. In a swampy area with trees, fenced off to stop the public from entering, the children saw around sixty little men, about half as tall as themselves. They had long white beards with red tips (though one boy was positive the beards were black), and wrinkled faces. They wore caps on their heads, described as being like old-fashioned nightcaps, Noddy-style, with a bobble on the end. They also wore blue tops and yellow tights. For most of the fifteen minutes that the children spent with them, the little men were in little cars. There were thirty cars, with two men in each. (One child said the cars were green and blue, one said they were red, one said red and white; perhaps they were of mixed colours.) The cars didn't have steering wheels, but a round thing with a handle to turn. There was no sound of engines, but they travelled fast, and could jump over obstructions like logs. The little men chased the children, but didn't catch them, although they could have done. The children were sure it was only a game. They said the men did not talk, but laughed a lot and looked friendly – 'joyful', one child said. At no time did they touch the children, nor did the children touch them. They were also seen up in the trees, coming out of and returning to holes. The children felt that they could only come out when it was dark. Despite the disbelief of their parents when told about the little men, the children were adamant that they were not making up stories. They also claimed to have seen the Little People before, during the long summer holiday. Their headmaster interviewed and recorded them separately soon after the events and, despite a few discrepancies in their accounts, and differences of emphasis, the children do sound truthful.



A drawing of the little green men seen in Wollaton Park, made by a child witness (Fortean Picture Library).

Over six years before the Wollaton fairies were reported in the media, I had corresponded with Marina Fry of Cornwall, who wrote to me giving details of her own fairy sighting when she was nearly four years old, around 1940. One night she and her older sisters, all sleeping in one bedroom, awoke to hear a buzzing noise (one sister said ‘music and bells’). Looking out of the window they saw a ‘little man in a tiny red car driving around in circles’. He was about eighteen inches tall, had a white beard, and a ‘red droopy pointed hat’. She stressed that he was ‘very happy looking’. He just disappeared after a while. The similarities between this sighting and the Wollaton Park case are striking.³⁷

A fairy boat, fairy cars ... there is also a report of a fairy aeroplane. In 1929 a five-year-old girl and her eight-year-old brother saw a tiny pilot in a tiny plane. They were in the garden of their home in Hertford when they heard the noise of an engine and saw something like a biplane with a

wingspan of twelve to fifteen inches swoop down over the garden fence. It landed briefly, almost hitting the dustbin, and then took off again and flew away. The pilot wore a leather flying helmet, and he waved at the children as he took off.³⁸ Little People travelling in vehicles leads me to think of other aerial craft from which small beings have emerged: the so-called flying saucers or UFOs of modern twentieth-century folklore. Examples from the many case reports, and discussion as to their links with the more traditional Little People and fairies, will follow in Chapter 5, but first we must leave Britain and Ireland and venture further afield, to discover whether the Little People are also seen elsewhere in the world, or are a peculiarly British and Irish phenomenon.

4

Dwarfs, mummies and little green men

Little People around the world

BELIEF IN THE existence of fairies and Little People is by no means confined to England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The world's folklore is rich in tales of smaller-than-human creatures who sound remarkably like their British and Irish counterparts. For example, in Russia the domovik or domovoj was a household spirit similar to the brownie. Old and grey-haired, he loved fire and lived behind the stove. He was called 'he', 'himself' or 'grandfather' – a name taboo was clearly in operation, as in Britain. Food would be left out for him at night.

In Europe, the Little People were known in practically every country. In France, Breton lore was full of fairies, Brittany being a Celtic land with close links to the Celtic areas of Britain and Ireland. Its *fées* and *corrigans* were once as numerous as the gentry of Ireland.¹

In Scandinavia, elves, dwarfs and trolls were legion; in Germany and Switzerland also, dwarfs lived in the mountains. Further north, in Iceland, there lived a race of hidden people (*huldufolk*) with similar characteristics to the fairy folk; and present-day belief in them is still strong. In a mid-1970s survey, 55 per cent of 900 people questioned thought their existence possible, probable or certain.

The construction of new roads in Iceland causes problems, because of the disturbance of fairy ground. When, in the early 1980s, a road was being built at Akureyri in the north, labourers were taken ill and machinery failed to work. The new road connecting Reykjavik to the suburb of Kopavogur was diverted around a hill where elves were said to live, and was called Elf Hill Road. Helgi Hallgrímsson, manager of the Museum of Natural History at Akureyri, has collected many eye-witness accounts of fairies. He commented: 'Those who tell me these stories are honest people, and many of them did not believe in such creatures until they saw them themselves'.

In the early 1990s, Reykjavik's planning department published a map showing the main dwelling places of 'hidden people, elves, light-elves, gnomes, dwarves'.²

The Little People were also to be found in the hotter countries close to and south of the Equator. In the 1930s G.I. Davys wrote of his experience of fairies in India:

In the lower Simla Hills in the neighbourhood of Dharmpur and Kasauli the fairies are supposed to be small people some seven inches high; in the winter they live in the trunks of the pine trees and in the summer they come out and dance on the flowers. They particularly like bridges of flowers such as flowering creepers or branches trained along palings. Some of these fairies are green and some are blue. I cannot say if they possess wings for none of our gardeners had observed this point. Our oldest gardener said he saw them constantly and always referred to them as of the female sex, they were always happy and always good-natured and we never heard of them as doing any harm. They were very fond of sweets, especially sugar; the gardeners regularly put out sugar for them, placing it beside the flowers. The fairies preferred moonlight nights for their dancing. We never saw them personally. They were always supposed to be beneficent and to bring happiness and good fortune, certainly we were very happy indeed in the lower Simla Hills.³

Rather different were the Little People living on the forested hill behind Bawyi in Ghana (West Africa). They were known as the *Asamanukpai*.

They are dwarf-men, with feet turned back to front, 'a little bigger than a monkey', and either black, white, or 'red' ... The old dwarfs are the biggest and are bearded. They all eat and dance on outcrops of smooth stone which they themselves polish.

The disc-shaped quartz thunderstones, holed through the middle, of unknown origin, which are plentiful in the district, and are said to have fallen from heaven, are also said to have had their holes made by being caught, on falling, between the finger and thumb of an *asamanukpa*.

Hunters obliged to invade the haunts of *asamanukpai* propitiate them with offerings of rum placed against their dancing-stones, and with the pans of clean water in which they like to bathe and splash. If disturbed or angered they stone the offender, lead him into the depths of the forest and there lose him.

Occasionally they lead a man away in order to befriend him, and during his

stay with them they teach him all they know, and squeeze into his eyes, ears and mouth the juice of a plant which enables him thereafter to see and hear all men's thoughts, to foresee all events, and also to sing and talk with the *Asamanukpa* people. On returning to his home after a sojourn of a week or two, he ... becomes a much revered fortune-teller, and giver of advice on medical and other matters.⁴

Folklore of this kind could be based on fact: there may at one time have been a pygmy race living in the area, which kept apart from the normal-sized population. Indeed, pygmy races may account for numerous tales of Little People from different parts of the world, for example the Australian bush, the jungles of Malaysia, several African countries, and also in South and Central America.⁵ Pygmies have also been used as an overall explanation of the fairy phenomenon, so I will discuss them more fully in Chapter 6, where all the theories will be considered together.

Tales of Little People are also widespread in American Indian folklore, and these may hint that pygmy races also once lived on the North American continent. In the far north, in the Arctic Ocean coastal community of Cambridge Bay (Victoria Island, Canadian North West Territories), people in the 1,000-strong community are claiming to have seen in recent years a seventy-strong tribe of Little People who are believed to roam the High Arctic. They are said to be about three feet tall, dressed in caribou skins and carrying bows and arrows, and Sean Peterson, recreational director for the area, added that 'people are leaving food out there, hoping if they were out there they'd take it and come into town and try to be friendly. All the elderly people say they're real. They've come across their camp sites and some people see them on the tundra hunting.'⁶

A report like this highlights the difficulty there sometimes is in drawing a dividing line between fact and fiction. Although at first glance it seems likely the local people could have seen a tribe of genuine Little People, it could just as easily be that a lingering folk belief in their existence has been revitalized. By being passed around from one to another the story has gained a spurious air of realism, just as the 'urban legends' (like the dead granny stolen off the car roofrack, or the microwaved pet) do in the Western world. It's not reasonable for an unprejudiced person to dismiss such accounts out of hand – for it is not impossible that a race of diminutive people might still survive in such a sparsely populated area, just as it is not impossible that Bigfoot/Sasquatch and other tall, hairy hominids

may today be living in the forests of North America and Siberia, China, etc. – but neither should we embrace such reports uncritically as providing positive evidence of their existence. We must always be aware that rumour often masquerades as fact.

Further south in Canada and the United States, the Little People have survived in both fact and folklore. The factual reports will come later in this chapter: first let's look at some fairy lore.

On the west coast of Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island there is a community called Inverness by the Scottish settlers. They also called the area the Shean, from the Gaelic word 'Sithean', meaning house of the fairies, and they believed that the Little People could be seen there. People walking at night would see them, but on approaching the hill, the fairies would vanish. This belief is clearly imported from Scotland, and the link with the home country is clear,⁷ but where did the American Indians import their fairy lore from? Or did it grow independently in the same way that Celtic fairy lore developed?

The Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, for example, know the Little People as Yunw Tsunsi, a race of elf-like Indians. They find small footprints in the snow in winter, but it is dangerous to follow them, for by doing so the Cherokee risk being pelted with stones or put under a spell. In his 1901 book *Myths of the Cherokee*, James Mooney told the story of a hunter who found some of these small tracks in deep snow in the mountains. He followed them and came to a cave where Little People were dancing and drumming. They took him in, gave him food to eat and a place to sleep, and he stayed there for sixteen days. His friends, who had been searching for him, thought he must have died. Mooney continued:

After he was well rested, they had brought him a part of the way home until they came to a small creek about knee deep, when they told him to wade across to reach the main trail on the other side. He waded across and turned to look back, but the Little People were gone, and the creek was a deep river. When he reached home, his legs were frozen, and he lived only a few days.

In 1987, 77-year-old Martha Wachacha related some of the tales she had heard during her youth. She said the Little People were about eighteen inches tall, with perfect proportions and hair that touched their heels. Some wore gold caps, while others went bare-headed. Lois Calonehuskie, a high-school counsellor, said,

Sometimes at night people will wake up and hear footsteps and voices in their houses. When they get up to see who is there, they find nothing. But in the morning, when they go to the kitchen and they find some food missing, they know the Little People have been there. Other times, you'll be standing by a stream and you'll hear children laughing, but, when you go to look, there's no one there. Then you know the Little People have been there.

The Cherokee treat the Little People with respect; they believe them to be the spirits of Indians from long ago, before the time of man.⁸

Throughout these worldwide tales of Little People, there are certain similarities to Celtic fairy lore, and anyone who could undertake a minutely detailed study of the beliefs from all over the world would surely find clues which would lead to a thorough understanding of why such beliefs should have once been so prevalent. Today much of the traditional knowledge is rapidly being lost, but the fact that Little People are still being seen indicates that despite the encroachment of 'civilization', the impulse behind belief in fairies is a strong one. It may also, of course, indicate that the Little People do have an objective existence, albeit not wholly in our world.

Physical remains would surely prove that Little People exist ... but as one might expect, the situation is not so clear-cut as that. Bodies of 'little people' have been produced from time to time, but identification is inconclusive. Skeletal remains of people whose average height was under five feet were found in Poland: they were thought to indicate that a pygmy race lived in the Breslau/Sobotka region around the first century BC. In Switzerland, remains of people less than five feet tall were also found, and in Eguisheim in Alsace the height of the people whose remains were found ranged from 3ft 11in to just under five feet. So it seems likely that pygmy races have lived in Europe, and not so very long ago.⁹

The buried remains of dwarf humans were also reported found in Victoria, British Columbia (Canada) around 1890. Excavations in mounds at Macaulay's Point and Cadboro Bay revealed iron weapons, utensils, and stone graves containing 'dwarfed bodies doubled up in a sitting posture'. They were thought to be the remains of ancient Indian tribes.¹⁰

While it is not too extraordinary to conclude that there have been dwarf humans and pygmies in many parts of the world, these small people being not much shorter than the average person today, the conclusion would have

been far less believable had the skeletons been only twenty inches tall. No known pygmy races have been as small as this, yet in 1932 two gold prospectors blasting granite rock in the Pedro Mountains, sixty-five miles south-west of Casper, Wyoming, came across a small cave where they found a mummified little man sitting on a tiny ledge. He had dark brown, wrinkled skin, a low forehead, flat nose, and a wide mouth with pointed teeth. X-rayed at the American Museum of Natural History, he was found to have a human skeletal structure. The creature was thought by some to be an adult around sixty-five years old, though Dr George Gill, professor of anthropology at the University of Wyoming, who examined the X-rays in 1979 (the mummy itself had by then disappeared), thought it was an infant or foetus which had anencephaly which could explain why its skeleton had adult proportions. If he is correct, then the mystery is explained. However, the Pedro mummy is not the only one to have been found. In addition to other mummies, small skulls have been found, not only in Wyoming but also in Montana's Beartooth Mountains. The suspicion that the Little People of Indian legends were a race of tiny pygmies has not yet been proved wrong.¹¹ Another mummy, even smaller, was exhibited in San Anselmo in 1979. Said to have been found in Central America around 1920, this one was only 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches long. It was mummified in a sitting position, hands and legs crossed, and X-rays showed its bone structure, but again, further study would be needed to show conclusively whether it was an adult, a child or a foetus.¹²

Finds of tiny arrowheads have fuelled speculation that they must have been made and used by an equally small race of people; but archaeologists believe them to have a more conventional history. Tiny arrows are sometimes known as 'bird points', and may have been used for hunting birds, but this is only speculation. Miniature tools of this kind have been found in many parts of the world, including Egypt, Africa, Australia, France, Sicily and India, as well as in various parts of the United States of America. At the end of the nineteenth century, hundreds of flint tools – scrapers, borers, crescent knives – none more than half an inch long and some smaller than a quarter-inch, were found under peat in the Pennines of East Lancashire in England. Their purpose is unknown, though it was suggested that they might have been used in rituals. The other possibility, of course, is that they were made for normal use by a tiny race of people – the Little People.¹³

Whether or not races of very small humans have ever existed within the reality in which we now live, there are plenty of people around the world who claim to have seen them. German researcher Ulrich Magin has discovered reports describing both large hairy ‘wildmen’ and small ‘earth dwarves’ with long white beards seen in Germany in the seventeenth century.

In 1635 Hans Krepel saw a ‘moss woman’ near Saalfeld and had a chat with her. On August 18, 1644, Kurfürst Johann Georg I caught a female dwarf 2 feet in height near Chemnitz (today, Karl Marx Stadt). An earthwoman tried to steal a human child and replace it with her own near Saalfeld in 1662. A strange and tiny humanoid creature dwelled in a cellar in Lutzen, and was observed several times in 1665. A year before, an earthdwarf was observed near Dresden. Another dwarf was seen in Torgau in March 1669.¹⁴

More recently in Germany, the fifteenth-century Wildenstein Castle near Heilbronn was said to have its resident ‘goblin’ in the 1950s. Strange noises had been heard and ghosts seen during the previous century, and even earlier, but it was in February 1955 that the goblin was first seen, at least in recent years. Maximilian, Baron Hofer von Lobenstein was the castle’s owner at the time, and it was he who saw the goblin, late one night when he let the dogs out. About ten feet away lit from behind by a small blue flame was a little man with a beard. He hopped around the Baron, but suddenly disappeared. The Baroness saw him too, on a different occasion. It was about noon when she saw a two-foot tall man in a yellow vest and peaked cap, who turned a somersault in one of the castle rooms. Many other strange things happened in the castle in the 1950s, and a thorough investigation by psychic researchers was undertaken.¹⁵

In Germany and across eastern Europe, spirits who lived in the mines were called kobolds. They were evil and malicious, and when miners heard them knocking, they took it as a sign not to work in that direction. In Hungary in the last century, a miner named Michael Engelbrecht believed that the knockings indicated to him when the spirits would appear in his hut. One such materialization was witnessed by author Mme Kalozdy: lights were seen, around which were the dim outlines of small human figures, described as black and grotesque. They flitted around before disappearing.¹⁶

A strange story emerged from Transylvania, an area of Romania, in

Mrs A.G., of Szemerja, coming home last Friday night, found a little red man sitting by the oven: the moon shone on the oven, and the outline of the little man could therefore be distinctly seen: his size was about that of a man's arm; a black cap crowned his head; his dress was red; his face and hands covered with hair. The woman's blood ran cold, as she stood staring at the strange being, who sat immovable in the moonlight: after some time, the creature advanced a few steps and disappeared. That night was spent in prayer; and in the morning she scrubbed the place where the little man had sat with garlic, and fumigated the whole place: but all in vain, for that very night the little red man sat by the oven again. As the woman entered the room, he approached her; when (either actuated by fright or by returning courage) the woman threw the can she held in her hand at the goblin: in one moment, he was on her back, thrust her head down and scratched her forehead. She fainted! and was bedfast for three days; nor did she recover until she had taken some dust from the place where the goblin sat, and drank of it three times, and she herself and the place had been fumigated three times! The little man was seen by other people last Saturday, after he had left the fainting woman, but has since disappeared. No doubt she must have seen some stray monkey, which had got loose by accident: but the good people of Szemerja are fully convinced that it was a goblin, if it was not the devil himself, as it has left traces of its footsteps behind, which are exactly like those of a goose.¹⁷

Earlier in the nineteenth century, the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924), the Devon parson who was interested in folklore, curiosities and strange events and wrote many books, himself saw some Little People when he was travelling in Provence (France) during his childhood. Sitting on the box of his father's carriage on a hot summer's day, he saw a horde of dwarfs, little men in peaked caps, who were running among the pebbles of the stony Cran landscape. The dwarfs seemed to be trying to climb up the horses, as well as jumping over tufts of grass and making faces at him. No one else could see them and gradually he saw fewer and fewer, until he could see them no more.¹⁸ It may be that Baring-Gould was for a short while able to see through the curtain which separates our world from that of the Little People.

Sometimes, as has happened in Britain, the Little People are seen riding their own tiny horses. The following account was written by Mrs Hardy,

wife of a settler in the Maori districts of New Zealand, around 1920, following publicity given to fairies by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edward L. Gardner.

After reading about what others have seen I am encouraged to tell you of an experience of my own which happened about five years ago. Will you please excuse my mentioning a few domestic details connected with the story? Our home is built on the top of a ridge. The ground was levelled for some distance to allow for sites for the house, buildings, lawns, etc. The ground on either side slopes steeply down, to an orchard on the left, and shrubbery and paddock on the right bounded by the main road. One evening when it was getting dusk I went into the yard to hang the tea-towels on the clothes-line. As I stepped off the verandah, I heard a sound of soft galloping coming from the direction of the orchard. I thought I must be mistaken, and that the sound came from the road, where the Maoris often gallop their horses. I crossed the yard to get the pegs, and heard the galloping coming nearer. I walked to the clothes-line and stood under it with my arms uplifted to peg the towel on the line, when I was aware of the galloping close behind me, and suddenly a little figure, riding a tiny pony, rode right under my uplifted arms. I looked round, to see that I was surrounded by eight or ten tiny figures on tiny ponies like dwarf Shetlands. The little figure who had come so close to me stood out quite clearly in the light that came from the window, but he had his back to it and I could not see his face. The faces of the others were quite brown, also the ponies were brown. If they wore clothes they were close-fitting like a child's jersey suit. They were like tiny dwarfs, or children of about two years old. I was very startled, and called out, 'Goodness, what is this?' I think I must have frightened them, for at the sound of my voice they all rode through the rose trellis across the drive, and down the shrubbery. I heard the soft galloping dying away into the distance, and listened until the sound was gone, then went into the house. My daughter, who has had several psychic experiences, said to me: 'Mother, how white and startled you look! What have you seen? And who were you speaking to just now in the yard?' I said, 'I have seen the fairies ride!'¹⁹

More recently, and also in the southern hemisphere, across the sea on the island of Fiji, children were seeing hairy dwarfs near their school. The details were given in a press report published in the *Fiji Times* in 1975.

According to students from Lautoka Methodist Mission School, about 8

mysterious little figures two feet in height and covered with black hair have been seen near the school. The figures, believed to be dwarfs, hastily moved away into nearby bushes when the children began to approach them. As the news spread, scores of neighbours rushed to the scene. The ‘dwarfs’ could not be found upon further investigation, and seemed to have jumped inside a pit near a bush.

Since the first sighting, dozens of people have gathered near the pit in the hopes of seeing the dwarfs. Some sat there for hours with sticks and torches, in the event the ‘little men’ might be harmful.

The head teacher of the Methodist School, Mr Narayan, said he threatened the children with punishment for made-up stories, ‘but they remain firm in whatever they have said about the mysterious figures’.

Apparently six different students, ranging in age from 10 to 14, actually saw the figures while returning home from school. One student said: ‘I saw his white gleaming eyes and black hair. I was frightened.’

‘One showed me his teeth and then ran away,’ claimed another student.

David, a student who apparently saw eight of the little people, wanted to speak to them but as he approached them, ‘the little ones ran away’.

Mr Peniasi Tora, a long-time villager who went to the scene after hearing the news, mentioned that when his forefathers first came to Fiji, they saw little men already living here.²⁰

As suggested at the end of the item, these could possibly have been the remnants of a race of very small people living on the island – but if they were, surely more sightings of them would have been made? It is interesting that they were thought to have taken refuge inside a pit. This echoes the many accounts telling how the Little People of Britain lived inside the earth.

Rather different, but very puzzling, is a tale which came out of Cuba. Some time during 1930, a navy captain was driving at around midnight on the Güines road towards the city of Havana when his car headlights lit up a short figure standing in the middle of the road. Thinking it was a lost child, the driver stopped and got out of the car. He couldn’t see any detail of facial features, presumably because the car lights were not shining on the being at this point, but it was about three feet tall and seemed muscular. He tried to pick it up, but couldn’t move it: it was as hard as a rock and seemed to be made of lead. Very surprised and probably frightened, he ran

back to his vehicle and left the place.²¹

South America has plenty of folklore tales of dwarf beings, often living in subterranean homes, but from time to time modern reports are published too. In Argentina in the 1980s, for example, there was a spate of reports of dwarfs and gnomes being seen by children. In late November 1983 green dwarfs were seen at Villa Montoro, an old house in La Plata city. They were described as being half a metre (twenty inches) tall, and had big heads, wrinkled humanlike skin, and green clothing. Footprints were found, and claw-marks on a tree-trunk; the dwarfs were said to live in tunnels under the house and garden, and to come out of a well in the yard. When someone tried to take a photograph of a dwarf, only dark shapes appeared on the film. A boy who fell into mud while fleeing from a group of dwarfs said that they shouted and whined at him, while one threw a brick at him.

Over the next few years little men were also appearing at various other Argentinian locations. Black hairy dwarfs were seen by children at Roque Saenz Pena in May/June 1985, one trying to kidnap a five-year-old boy. In Parana city in December 1986, three children aged eight to eleven were playing on the banks of a stream when eight to ten gnomes appeared as if by magic. They had claws for hands, not much hair, and two small horns! Having no feet, they appeared to levitate above the water. The boys fled, but eight-year-old Claudio fell, his friends abandoning him to his fate. He threw a stone at a gnome carrying something that looked like an arrow – but the stone went right through him. Strange tracks were found (which is odd, if the gnomes had no feet!) after the creatures shrank and disappeared in a cloud of black, sickening smoke.²²

These reports are representative of many emanating from Argentina. Although the dwarfs are rarely seen along with UFOs, the reports come from areas where UFOs are often seen, and there is reason to believe the two may be linked, a possibility to be explored more fully in Chapter 5.

Some strange reports of dwarfs have also come out of North America during the past hundred years. The continent is already well known for sightings of the giant hairy man-beast known as Bigfoot or Sasquatch; but despite well over 1,000 sightings this century, there is still no solid proof that the creature exists. No carcase has been obtained for scientific study; the only physical evidence is controversial in some way – footprints and photographs that could have been faked, hairs and excreta that could have

come from something else. The situation with regard to the Little People is much the same: despite the existence of serious reports from apparently sane people, and some physical evidence which is controversial (the Pedro mummy, for instance), there is no way anyone can *prove* that Little People exist, either as pygmy races or as beings living in another dimension which closely overlaps our world, or as anything else. It's a frustrating situation, most especially for the people who have seen the Little People and told others, but have rarely been believed. Here is a selection of their stories.

William Allen White was a journalist who began as a newspaper reporter in Kansas City in 1891. About to start his new job, he was at home in El Dorado (Kansas) saying goodbye to friends before leaving for the city. Awakening that August night, he heard music. On looking out of the window, he saw under the elm tree a group of Little People only three or four inches tall, dancing along with the music. He looked away and then looked back, but they were still there. He went back to bed, but later when he looked out again there they were. Then, as he watched, they began to fade until they had disappeared. Writing of the experience in his autobiography, he commented, 'When I recall that hour I am so sure that I was awake I think maybe I am still crazy.'²³

A little man who turned up on a farm near Farmersville (Texas) in May 1913 got a reception he can't have expected. Three boys chopping cotton were alerted by the barking of the dogs, and went to investigate. What they found was a little man about eighteen inches tall, and dark green in colour. He wasn't wearing any clothes, but his body looked like a rubber suit, including a hat that looked like a 'Mexican hat'. As the boys looked on, the dogs jumped on the little man and tore him to pieces. The boys saw that he had human-looking internal organs, and red blood. Afterwards, the dogs avoided the spot where the remains lay rotting in the sun, and they seemed frightened. Next day, when the boys went to the place again, there was nothing to be found, not even a bloodstain.

One of the witnesses was Silbie Latham, and many years later, in 1978, his grandson wrote to the Center for UFO Studies about the occurrence. He said, 'My grandfather has a most solid reputation for truth and honesty but has never told of this because of fear of ridicule ... He has agreed to tell this only after much prompting and encouragement from me, his history-oriented grandson. He would take a polygraph or be hypnotized or whatever you need. There is no question in my mind that he is telling the

truth.’ Mr Latham was interviewed by Larry Sessions of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, who described him as ‘a remarkable man’. Clearly finding the story difficult to believe, Sessions commented, ‘There’s no doubt he *believes* it happened, but that doesn’t mean it *did* happen. Maybe he has an overactive imagination. Or maybe his brothers played a trick on him and he’s sort of unconsciously embellished the story over the years.’ Mr Latham vigorously rejected Mr Sessions’ suggestion that the ‘little man’ might have been a large frog.²⁴

Little People dressed in green, or green in colour, have already been described in this and earlier chapters, and will appear again later, so the green colouring of Silbie Latham’s ‘little man’ was a convincing detail. The derogatory phrase ‘Little Green Men’, used to describe so-called men from Mars and other aliens, may be much more accurate than most people realize! An inhabitant of Nova Scotia also saw a little man in green, while travelling from Lisbon to Hillsboro (date unknown, but probably early this century). He described his encounter with a ‘lepricorn’ as follows:

I seen a little fellow about two feet, two inches high. He had a little green coat on him, and a little red skull cap. He had a stick in his hand. So I wondered who he was, and where he came from, and what his name was. Then I remembered about the lepricorn. He is the fairy guardian of all buried treasures and money. If you can look him straight in the face, and look him square in the eye, you’ll get a lot of money. But you must never take your eye off him. I followed him. I said to him, ‘Take me to a pot of gold.’ He had to take me, because I had my eye right on him. So we went on, but just then a noise in the thicket made me withdraw my gaze just for a moment. When I looked again, the lepricorn was gone. So was the money.²⁵

Another undated encounter with a ‘little green man’ comes from Morongo Valley in California. A man driving his truck up Rawson Road was alarmed when a small green man jumped out into the road just ahead of him. He braked and swerved to avoid him, and saw the little man making a face at him as he stopped. Then he heard a clanking noise, and got out to investigate, carrying his hunting knife. He found the little man underneath his radiator, unscrewing a protective plate with his fingers. The driver jumped back into the truck and drove off. As he did so, he could hear the plate banging on the road. He stopped at a friend’s house and wired it up. The next day, he went back down the Rawson Road, and found

the missing bolts lying in the middle of the road at the place where the little man had unscrewed them.²⁶

The little man seen briefly in Oregon some time in the middle of this century didn't do any damage to the vehicle he was close to. He was seen by Ellen Jonerson of Canby (Oregon) as he walked under the running board of a 1937 Dodge car. He didn't bend at all as he passed beneath it, and she said he couldn't have been more than nine inches tall. He was man-like, dark-skinned, and wearing something like rompers and a plaid shirt. She didn't feel threatened by him, and he just seems to have been passing by. He walked into the grass and she never saw him again.²⁷

Plaid was also the cloth favoured by a little man seen in Maryland earlier this century. Details of the encounter were related by the witness's niece.

This happened in Snowhill. My Uncle Sewell was dating a girl who lived in Pocomoke. He went to see her so often that the horse knew the route. On this particular evening he had an argument with her about marriage. He did not want to get married but she did. Finally he left and his thoughts were of her. He slowed down to a thinking pace which is very slow. Suddenly out of the woods appeared a little man in a bright yellow tie and a green plaid jacket. He called to the little man, but the little man just smiled. My uncle used the whip to speed up his horse and the little man started running faster. The little man kept the same pace as the horse did and would give a smile every so often. When my uncle got outside of Pocomoke the little man disappeared. My uncle took this as a warning to stay away from that lady. So he did.²⁸

Oak Island, on the western side of Nova Scotia's Mahone Bay, has long been famous as the location of treasure believed to be buried there. Despite many attempts, costly in both money, time and labour, nothing valuable has been found. In recent years, tourists visiting the island have reported some strange experiences: one man collided with an invisible wall, while others have seen a dwarf. A couple from New York saw him in September 1973, while they were walking near the place where the man ran into the invisible wall. They described a small beardless man dressed in white, including his large 'seven league' boots. He was accompanied by a larger man dressed in black, with a cloak and three-cornered hat. Two years later, the odd couple were also seen by two local ladies, but in a different part of the island.²⁹

Writing in *Fate* magazine in 1978, Jane Frances T. Woodruff described

her two sightings of Little People in Massachusetts. The first encounter took place in spring 1974 in Lexington.

My friend Barbara and I were walking to our high school and enjoying the fine weather. We both happened to glance to our left at a small patch of weeds where a figure about 10 inches tall was sitting with his knees drawn up to his chin and showing us his right profile.

‘Did you see that?’ we exclaimed in unison. Surprisingly enough, we both described the leprechaun the same way: green clothes, a long thin curved golden pipe between his lips and a flopped-over conical cap.

A year later, in Ashby, Mass., my friend Orin and I both saw a group of elfin creatures no more than five inches tall staring curiously at us. In a field of blue wildflowers we saw hundreds of tiny fairies leaping from flower to flower in an exquisite dance.

I would have thought I was imagining such wondrous sights if my friends hadn’t been there to describe the same scenes.³⁰

Tiny fairies were also seen in September 1993, by Karen Maralee who was on a camping trip to the sacred site of Mount Shasta in California. She was travelling alone, and revelling in quiet contemplation of life and nature, clearly in the relaxed frame of mind which often seems to facilitate a glimpse into another world. At dusk she heard children’s voices singing, and in a small clearing in the trees she saw ‘11 tiny blue fairies, perhaps one foot tall, and seemingly transparent ... The blue color was electric, seeming to pulsate or flicker ... The wings were larger than the fairy bodies themselves and appeared to be particularly delicate and lacy.’ She watched without daring to breathe, but when she had to breathe out, the noise alerted the fairies who leapt up and disappeared. On the ground Karen found eleven piles of blue dust she calls ‘fairy dust’ and collected some to take home. She feels it is magical, and has helped the people she has secretly sprinkled with it.³¹

A good number of the sightings described in this book have been made by children, and it seems to me that a larger proportion of the witnesses are children than one would expect, bearing in mind that there are more adults than children (say, ages five to fifteen). If the majority of Little People seen are ‘supernatural’ rather than physical beings, then it may be that children, being relatively uncontaminated by earthly concerns, have a higher level of psychic awareness than adults, and thus can see things that their elders do

not see, or choose to block out.

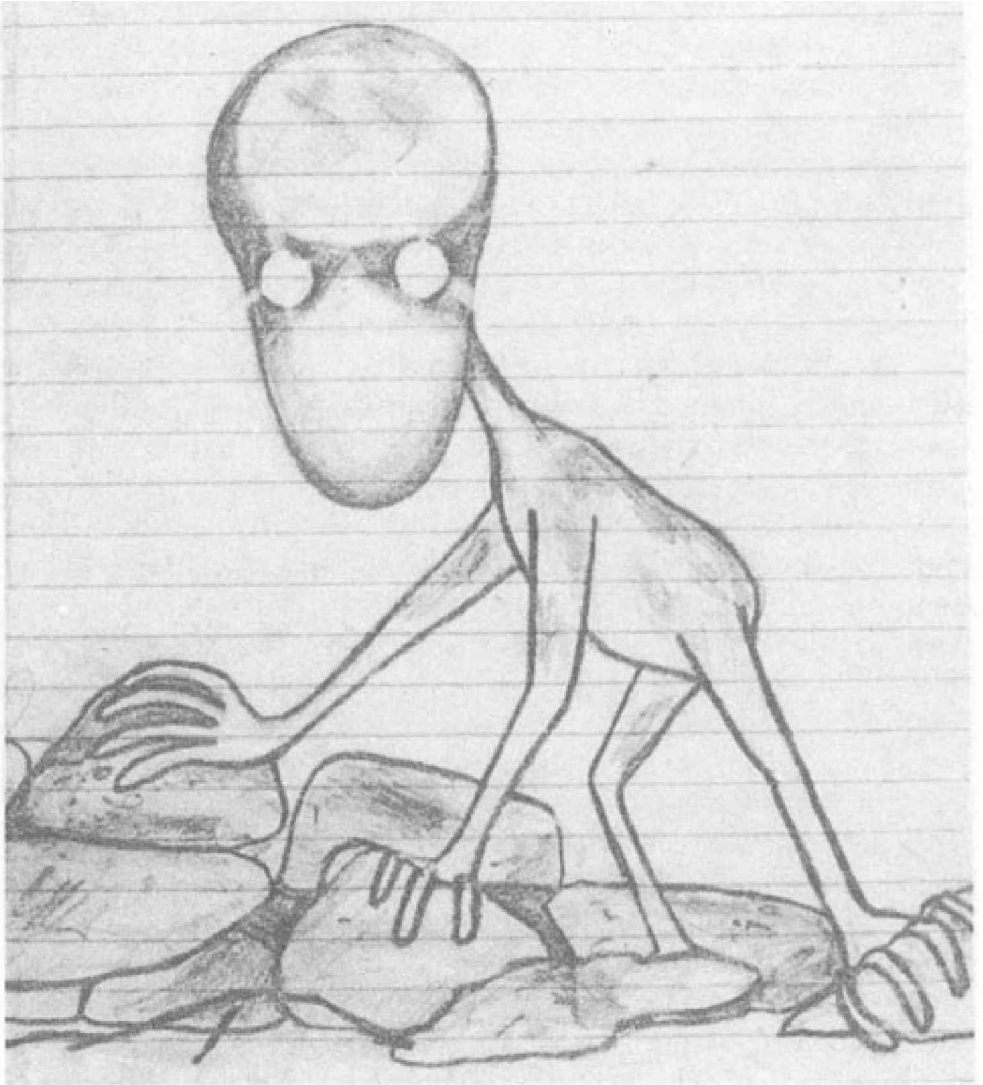
The next witness was an eight-year-old boy who, in 1976, saw a little man 'not much bigger than a Coke bottle' near Dunn (North Carolina). Tonnlie Barefoot was alone and playing with a toy shovel in a cornfield. Looking up, he saw a little man watching him open-mouthed. He was wearing black boots, blue trousers and a blue shiny top, 'the prettiest little white tie you ever saw', and a black 'German-type hat'; he ran off fast with a squeal like a mouse. Tonnlie found some small footprints, and took his mother to see them. Others saw them too, including the managing editor of the local newspaper, Fred H. Bost, who said that 'The tracks were definitely those of little boots; cleat marks were easily discernible. I failed to count the number in the first set, but there were 14 in the second set, which was clearer than the first. Individual prints were 2¼ inches long and about 1 inch wide at the broadest point.'

Tonnlie's sighting was made on 12 October, and Bost reported that a fortnight later, on 25 October, twenty-year-old Shirley Ann McCrimmon also saw a little man. He was either wearing a thin garment or was naked, and light brown in colour. He wore no hat, but he did wear boots, and she found a small footprint; Fred Bost found another. He commented, 'The strange part about the footprints were that they led nowhere in any of the locations where they were found. The ground was soft in both areas of the cornfield, yet in both cases the footprints ended abruptly. The ground was hard where the footprints were found at the McCrimmon home; yet around the back where the little man was said to have disappeared, there was a garden area with soft earth – but here no footprints could be found.'³²

Again it was youngsters who saw what has now become known as the 'Dover Demon'. The first sighting was made during the night of 21 April 1977, when seventeen-year-old Bill Bartlett was driving two friends through their wooded home town of Dover (Massachusetts). Bartlett's headlights lit up a strange creature he first thought was a dog or cat. Then he saw its two round glassy lidless eyes, shining bright orange. The eyes were set in a large watermelon-shaped head; the body was thin, as were the arms and legs, and it grasped with its fingers the rocks on top of the wall where it was standing. Bartlett thought it was about 3½ to four feet tall. Neither of the others in the car saw the creature, and at first didn't believe what Bill was telling them. When he got home, he drew what he had seen. Around midnight, John Baxter, aged fifteen, was walking home alone

when he too saw the creature, standing by a tree in a wooded gulley. His description was the same as Bartlett's, but he had not heard of Bill's sighting. Twenty-four hours later, Will Taintor (eighteen) and Abby Brabham (fifteen) also saw the Dover Demon, as they drove past it in a car. Experienced investigator Loren Coleman interviewed all the witnesses only a few days afterwards, and brought in other researchers, but no conventional explanation could be found, nor was there any evidence that the youngsters were hoaxing.³³

However much the disbelievers try to eliminate reports of inexplicable happenings by means of ridicule, cries of 'Hoax!' and appeals to scientific reason, people still report strange events; indeed they seem to occur as frequently as ever, even in our supposedly rational and scientific world. Little green men hit the headlines in Nome (Alaska) as recently as August 1988 when more than a dozen people saw them on five separate nights. As reported in the local newspaper, the Nome *Nugget*, the sightings started on 24 August:



Bill Bartlett's first pencil sketch of the 'Dover Demon' he saw in 1977 (Loren Coleman/Fortean Picture Library).

The first sightings were by some teenagers out for a drive on the Beltz road after work at Flag Stop. It was approximately 2.00 p.m. [*sic*, but probably should be 2 a.m.] They noticed a glow in the rear view mirror as they headed toward Icy View. The strangeness of it prompted them to turn around and head back toward town. As they drew near the figure, a couple of the guys said their

first thought was that it was a lady on the road walking toward Nome – because they could see legs and feet walking. Their eyes almost bugged out of their heads when they finally realized the whole body had a greenish luminescence and was walking somewhat off the center of the road.

When they pulled up behind it the little green man was starting running fast. He was between two and three feet high and appeared somewhat transparent sort of like a hologram. Yet as he ran the boys could see that he possessed a well-developed muscular structure like a trained athlete's, broad shoulders and muscular legs. The kids speeded up the car and clocked the little fella at between 40 and 50 mph. They went past it and in the process ran over it, but they felt no bump or thud. He seemed to flatten out.

The kids got scared at that point and floored it into town. They picked up friends and co-workers for reinforcements and also to shore up their shaken nerves. Then they went back out there. The little green man was not where they left him when they ran over him. He was farther up the road toward Martinson's and standing on the side of the road. At that point, the folks who were picked up in town saw him. They stopped and watched. The thing turned from green to silver before their eyes. Every once in a while his feet got darker.

A couple of the boys left the car and started chasing it on foot. The luminescent entity ran off the road, but had not gone far when it turned on the kids and chased them back to their car. It was then that its red eyes were noticed. The only sound it made was a sort of dry whistling hiss. There was not a total agreement among the observers on the sound or lack of, largely due to the fact that by this time most were slightly hysterical. Everybody made it back into the car; no one else wanted to get out. The little man went somewhere and the carload of folks went back to town.

The second night the observation of one little green man was between 2 and 3 a.m. approximately the same place as the previous night. This time they (the same group as the previous night) brought the KNOM station manager and engineer with them – plus some other folks. There were at least three cars out there. One car ran over the little green man. This was observed by the others. It seemed, they said, as if the car ran through him.

The adult witnesses said they couldn't see as much detail on the small figure as the kids could. Indeed, it seemed from the people interviewed that the older a person was the less detail they could see, even though one adult ran his car over the little green man and was as close as the kids to the glowing figure.

By the third night, a regular rendezvous was established. Three little green

men were observed between 2–3 a.m. This time one turned silver, one turned black, and one remained green. Even though the color changed on two of them, some people described the retention of a bluish-green aura.

On the fourth night there was a whole bunch of people at 1.00 a.m. on that same stretch of road. Nothing, but at 2.30 a.m. the little green men made their appearance. One silver, one black, and one blue-green.

The fifth night at 2.00 a.m. two little men both green appeared to be dancing on the road.

The sixth night nothing – no green men. Folks waited and watched to no avail.³⁴

Janet Ahmasuk who wrote that article also collected details of other local encounters with Little People over the years. One man who was cod fishing was visited by little men as he sat sheltering from the snow in a snow guard he had built. They had ‘pack sacks, seal skin pants, mukluks, almost white skin parkys and they sported miniature mustaches on their faces’. The fisherman spoke to them in Eskimo and they answered in Eskimo, saying they had been hunting and fishing like him.³⁵ Another informant told how she had followed small footprints in the sand and came upon a little man wearing an Eskimo-style squirrel parky and spearing fish. When he raised his spear as if to defend himself, she ran home.³⁶ Two brothers were grabbed by Inukins (small wild men with bowl haircuts and wearing caribou skins) one summer day in 1938 when fetching water from the Noatak River: they struggled and managed to escape. In the same year their sister chased away two Inukins who were in the act of stealing salmon drying on her rack. The family has had other encounters since.³⁷

The strangest tale collected by Janet Ahmasuk was of three little men who came to an Alaskan village in a silvery-looking disc from the sky, some time in the past (perhaps around 200 years ago). The little men settled in the village and spoke Eskimo. They told the local people that they could not return home because their craft had broken down and could not be repaired.³⁸ Were the 1988 visitors from the same place, and did they too come to Alaska in a silvery craft, what we would now call a UFO? The strange quality they exhibited, seeming to be transparent and remaining unharmed when run over by cars, suggests that whatever they were, they were not physical beings. Over the last fifty years many strange stories have been put on record describing the landing of non-terrestrial craft and

the emergence of non-human beings. A high proportion of these beings are short in stature, and some of them are green in colour. Are these UFO entities a twentieth-century version of the traditional fairies? Some descriptions of the UFO entities and their behaviour, which are the subject of the following chapter, will reveal what features are shared by the two types of creature.

5

UFO entities and fairies

Are they the same?

‘And many such have been taken away by the said spirits, for a fortnight or month together, being carried with them in chariots through the air, over hills and dales, rocks and precipices, till at last they have been found lying in some meadow or mountain, bereaved of their senses.’

Discourse upon Devils and Spirits, added to Reginald Scot’s *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (third edition 1665)

UFO RESEARCHERS WHO have also taken an interest in folklore have noticed some strong similarities between the creatures sometimes seen to emerge from landed UFOs, and the traditional fairies or Little People. The following case, dating back probably to the early nineteenth century and first published over a hundred years ago, demonstrates this link at a time long before ‘UFOs as alien craft’ were even thought of. The sole witness of the events was a servant, David Williams, who lived at Penrhyndeudraeth Gwynedd, North Wales and who, on the night in question, was walking some distance behind his mistress, carrying home a flitch of bacon. He eventually arrived back three hours after her, and when questioned said he was only three *minutes* later. He took some convincing of his delayed arrival, and explained what had happened to him.

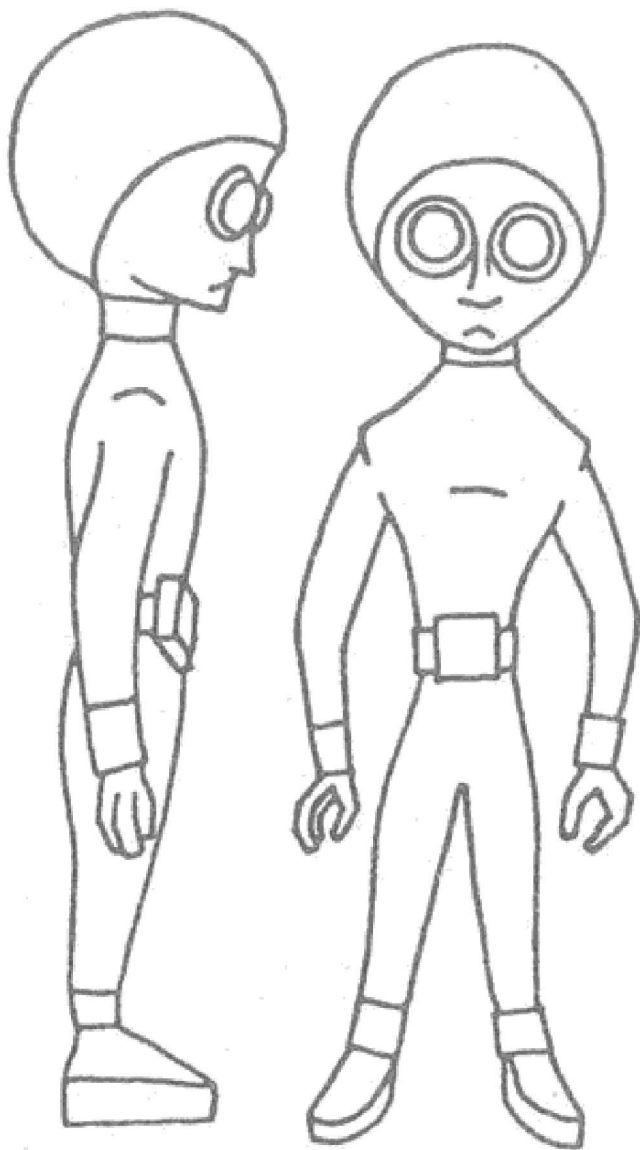
He observed, he said, a brilliant meteor passing through the air, which was followed by a ring or hoop of fire, and within this hoop stood a man and woman of small size, handsomely dressed. With one arm they embraced each other, and with the other they took hold of the hoop, and their feet rested on the concave surface of the ring. When the hoop reached the earth these two beings jumped out of it, and immediately proceeded to make a

circle on the ground. As soon as this was done, a large number of men and women instantly appeared, and to the sweetest music that ear ever heard commenced dancing round and round the circle. The sight was so entrancing that the man stayed, as he thought, a few minutes to witness the scene. The ground all around was lit up by a kind of subdued light, and he observed every movement of these beings. By and by the meteor which had at first attracted his attention appeared again, and then the fiery hoop came to view, and when it reached the spot where the dancing was, the lady and gentleman who had arrived in it jumped into the hoop, and disappeared in the same manner in which they had reached the place. Immediately after their departure the Fairies vanished from sight, and the man found himself alone and in darkness, and then he proceeded homewards. In this way he accounted for his delay on the way.¹

We must remember that David Williams had not heard of UFOs or flying saucers – even the terrestrial aircraft we now take for granted were unknown to him. So his description of a ‘hoop of fire’ from which the couple emerged is a reasonable way for him to have described the strange sight which we would now call a UFO. Assuming that the ‘men and women’ who then appeared were fairies living locally and not themselves from the fiery craft, then this case is probably unique in describing an encounter between little people from a UFO and Little People on earth. An air of unreality pervades this report. I’m not suggesting that the events sound unlikely, but that for the witness an otherworldly aura seems to have surrounded them. The apparent inconsequentiality of the events is strong: what is the reason for this meeting of little people and UFO people, and what compelled them to dance together before abruptly parting again? David Williams thought he watched for only a few minutes, but it was in fact three hours: does this mean that he unwittingly strayed into another world – fairyland – where time runs at a different speed?

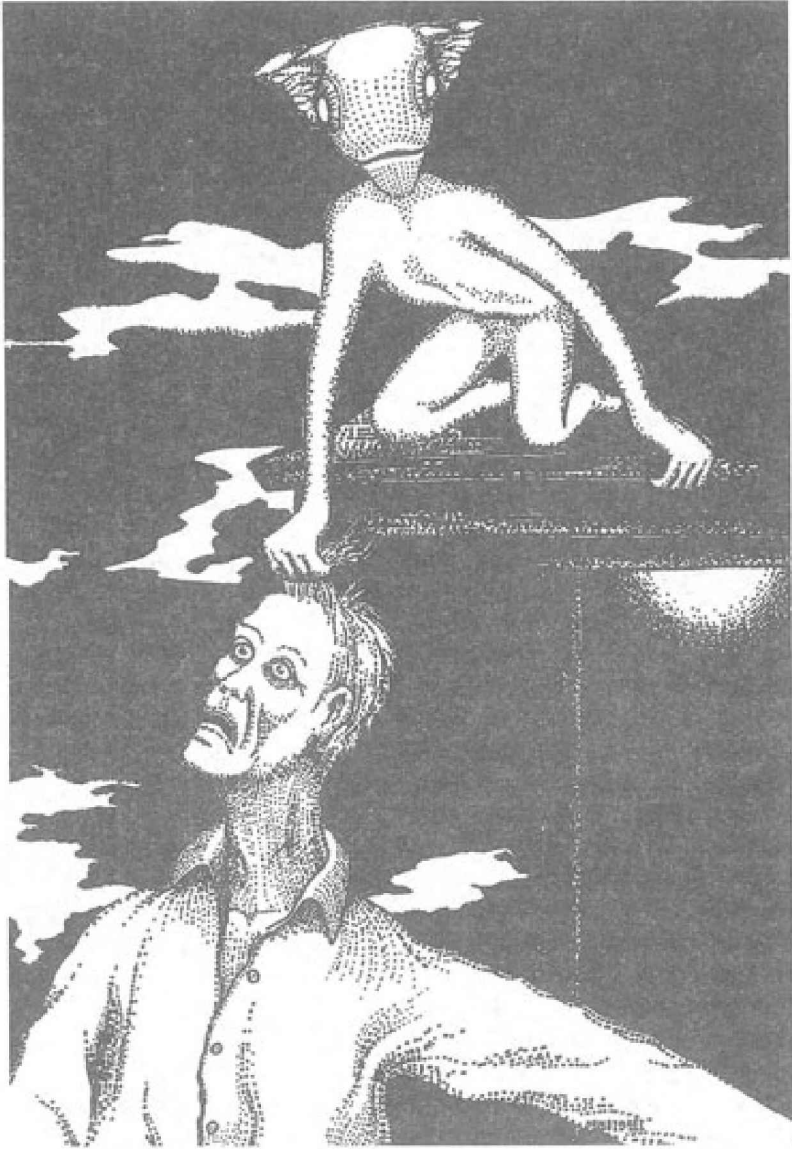
A much more recent case from Norway has some similarities to David Williams’ experience. Again the events lasted for about three hours, and again a large number of Little People was seen. The Hønefoss case dates from 28 October 1985, and the witnesses were

children aged seven to twelve, who were out on a cold night watching an eclipse of the moon. They saw an oval light moving towards them from the sky, and one child shone a torch at it. The light shone a bright glow in their direction, and in this strong light they saw a hundred tiny beings less than two feet tall in the road. They all wore box-like structures on their heads, and were different colours including white, brown and black. They ran away on seeing the children, but were seen repeatedly during the next three hours, sometimes apparently playing a game like hide and seek. (Acting inconsequentially, as did the beings David Williams saw.) Parents were alerted, but none came to look. A jogger passing by claimed only to see a cat! (Maybe he was not on the same wavelength as the children.) Footprints were found, but a dog excitedly pawed at them and they were destroyed. A strange story, but it is one that rings true, perhaps by reason of its strangeness.²



Two depictions of small UFO entities. (Above) R. L. Johannis, out painting near Villa Santina in Italy in August 1947, saw a disc land and two beings about three feet tall emerge. Their skin was greenish in colour and, when Johannis waved, one of them shot a vapour at him which made him fall down. After looking at his easel, they returned to their craft. This is a very early report of a UFO sighting with entities, in the year when the modern UFO era began

(Fortean Picture Library).



An artist's impression of the strange events which took place at a remote farmstead near Hopkinsville, Kentucky, in August 1955, when entities three feet tall swarmed around the building and terrified the occupants (Loren Coleman/Fortean Picture Library).

UFO landing cases where entities have been seen can be divided into two main categories: those where the entities appeared to be human (the so-called ‘contactee’ cases), and those where the entities were clearly not human. These latter are often four feet or less in height, with a definite non-human appearance, though just as the Little People do not all look alike, so do the small UFO entities vary considerably in appearance. Although this might suggest that the sightings are hoaxed or imaginary, that is not necessarily the case, and I will discuss the significance of this point further in Chapter 6. From the many reports of small UFO entities seen during the last fifty years, I have selected a few cases which together provide a representative picture of these creatures: what they might look like and how they might behave.

On 24 November 1978, Angelo D’Ambros was gathering firewood near his home in Gallio, north-east Italy. After cutting up a branch, he turned – and saw two creatures around three feet tall hanging in the air about eighteen inches above the ground. They had large bald heads, big pointed ears, sunken white eyes, large noses, fleshy lower lips and two long pointed fangs. They had very large hands and feet compared to the rest of the body, with long fingers and nails, and were dressed in tight dark garments. Terrified, D’Ambros asked who they were and what they wanted, but heard from them only mumbling noises. One came towards him and tried to take his wood-cutting tool, but he held on to it and they struggled for possession. The creature was strong, and D’Ambros felt electric shocks through his hand. When he grabbed a branch, intending to hit the creature, the two entities fled, seemingly aware of his intentions. D’Ambros ran after them along the track, having regained his nerve during the struggle. They went out of sight round a bend, but he ran on, and came to a clearing where he saw a solid metallic disc with a dome, standing on four legs. It was about twelve feet wide and six feet high, and he could see one of the creatures’ long arms closing a sort of trapdoor from inside the dome. Instantly the craft took off and silently shot away behind the trees. Later his son-in-law found a circular area with black flattened grass at the landing site.³

As in so many reports, the creatures’ behaviour is strange with no

apparent meaning to it. Why should they want to steal D'Ambros' billhook? The actions of three entities seen in Brazil in 1976 were equally inexplicable. Joao Romeu Klein, a nineteen-year-old farm worker, was walking home on the evening of 3 September when he saw a disc in the sky, about ten feet in diameter. It stopped just ahead of him, about fifteen feet above the road, and a beam of red light shone down from it. Three small beings about three feet tall were slowly descending in the light until they stood in front of him across the road. They spread their arms to stop Klein proceeding, so he threw his big knife used for cutting sugar-cane leaves at them, but it struck an invisible barrier. One of the creatures pointed a 'rod' at him: a blue-white light came from it and touched Klein's leg, after which he fell unconscious, only coming round after being carried home by neighbours. Afterwards his leg was very stiff but he eventually recovered. The entities Klein saw were more human-like than those seen by D'Ambros; they were also heard speaking to each other, but Klein could not understand what they said.⁴ Why should they have wished to prevent Klein from walking to his home? They didn't seem to want to communicate with him, and their actions seem inexplicable from a human standpoint.

Italy and Brazil are only two of the many countries where similar inconsequential encounters with small UFO entities have occurred. In France during 1954 a large number of UFOs were seen, many of the witnesses also seeing little entities. On 9 October at Pournoy-la-Chétive, near Metz, for example, three children aged five to twelve saw 'a round, shiny machine' which landed close by

Out of it came a kind of man, four feet tall, dressed in a black sack like the cassock M. le Curé wears. His head was hairy, and he had big eyes. He said things to us that we couldn't understand, and we ran away. Pretty soon we stopped and looked back. The machine was going up into the sky very fast.

A man close to the children also saw it take off. Only two hours later, a man driving near Briatexte saw 'two small creatures the size of children of eleven or twelve, who were crossing the road in front of my

car. I stopped instantly. But before we had time to get out we saw a red, glowing disc taking off straight up from the meadow next to us, and saw it disappear in the sky a few seconds later.⁵

If all the UFO and entity sightings in France during 1954 really happened as reported, then the alien beings were for some unknown reason devoting a lot of time and effort to their activities around that country. A thread of purposelessness runs through the whole body of documented UFO entity activity. Clearly, whatever they are doing is likely to be incomprehensible to us. Years of study have provided few clues. Perhaps we should approach the puzzle differently: humans are generally purposeful and so expect that other beings will be purposeful too, but perhaps they just do not have such a concept in their world (or worlds – there may be more than one type of entity involved, from more than one source).

Small UFO entities have also been seen in Britain. A very strange case took place on the morning of 4 January 1979 at Rowley Regis in the West Midlands. Mrs Jean Hingley was at home, having seen her husband off to work at 6 a.m. Seeing an orange light by the car port, she went to investigate and saw a large orange sphere hovering over the garden. Three small figures shot past her into the house: they were about 3½ feet tall, wore silvery tunics and transparent helmets 'like goldfish bowls' and also had large oval 'wings' seemingly made of thin paper and decorated with glittering dots. A halo surrounded each figure, and thin streamers hung down from their shoulders. Their limbs were silvery-green, and they appeared to have no hands or feet, the limbs ending in tapering points. They spoke and were understood by Mrs Hingley, but she noticed that they always spoke in unison. When she asked where they came from, they replied, 'From the sky', and, when she complained about the light they repeatedly shone at her forehead, told her that they hadn't come to harm her. They went round the room, touching things, and it seemed as if they were magnetic, for the things they touched lifted up. When she saw them looking at bottles of drink left over from Christmas, she asked if they wanted some, and they said, in unison, 'Water, water, water', so she fetched a tray with glasses of water, plates and mince-pies. They took the water, and later

returned the glasses empty, though Mrs Hingley didn't see them drink. When she lit a cigarette, to show them how to smoke, they 'sort of shot back', and she feels they were also afraid of the fire. They then glided out of the house, each taking a mince-pie, returned to their craft which was hovering outside, and took off. Mrs Hingley felt very ill, so she spent the rest of the day lying on the settee and suffered after-effects for some time, including severe headaches. Marks were left on the grass where the craft had been, and various electrical items in the house were damaged, as if they had been affected by a strong magnetic field. The cassette tapes which the creatures had handled were distorted and useless.⁶

However ridiculous Mrs Hingley's experience may sound in its details, the fact remains that something clearly occurred, because the after-effects could not be ignored. It is interesting that although Mrs Hingley could communicate with the creatures, she felt that buttons on their tunics which they pressed before they spoke acted as some kind of translation device. She commented, 'Every word they didn't understand, they did 1-2-3 ever so fast on their chests ... bleep-bleep, bleep-bleep ... I said "You'll learn a lot of things from me with that bleep-bleep." And they said "Yes-yes".'

In none of the other cases quoted earlier in this chapter has the witness been able to understand what the UFO entities were saying, and this fact holds true for the majority of cases of this kind. If the witnesses were imagining or making up the events they describe, it is more likely that they would enable their imaginary entities to speak in the same language as themselves, so that they could ask them questions and receive answers. This is exactly what happened in the more dubious contactee cases, where the 'contactee' witness allegedly spoke with UFO entities of human appearance who claimed to come from other planets.

The small UFO entities so far described have all been between three and four feet tall, but sometimes even smaller beings are seen. Early in July 1953, when fourteen-year-old Maximo Munoz Hernaiz was looking after some cows near the village of Villares del Saz in central Spain, he heard a faint whistling noise and turned to find that a

machine, which he at first thought was a big balloon, had landed. It was glowing, and Hernaiz estimated it was about four feet high. Still thinking it was a balloon, he walked over to it, but before he could reach it, a door opened and little people started coming out. Three of them jumped down to the ground, and Hernaiz described them as being about two feet tall, with yellow faces and narrow eyes. They were dressed in blue, with flat hats, and a 'metal sheet' on their arms. They approached the boy and spoke to him, but he couldn't understand them. One of them hit him in the face; then they all walked back to their machine. They jumped inside, and the craft took off fast, 'like a rocket'. Hernaiz ran home and told his father, who didn't believe him, but he went out to the place and found footprints, and four holes in the ground.⁷

The fact that, so often, physical traces are found following sightings of landed UFOs with entities, indicates that there is some objective reality to the events reported, and the witness wasn't simply hallucinating or fabricating. It is always possible, of course, that he or she created the confirmatory physical traces by means of psychokinetic (PK) energy effects (in the same way that some people claim to be able to bend metal without touching it); but this seems to be as unlikely as the landing of alien beings. A third possibility is that an over-eager investigator has mistaken for landing traces something which has a more mundane explanation altogether, such as marks caused by terrestrial machinery like tractors, or human activity. This may happen on occasion, but it is unlikely always to be the explanation. Just think of the tiny footprints found after Tonnlie Barefoot said he had seen a little man in the cornfield (see here): these prints showed very clear detail, and are unlikely to have an easy, non-mysterious explanation, unless they were faked – but such fakery would seem to be beyond the capability of a small boy.

The two-foot entities of Villares del Saz were giants when compared with those seen in Malaysia during the 1970s and 1980s. The sightings seem to have begun in 1970 at Bukit Mertajam (State of Penang) where on 19 August six boys saw a blue UFO the size of a soup plate, which landed in bushes near their school. Five entities, three inches tall, came

out: four wore blue clothes, the fifth was in yellow. The creatures appeared to be fixing an aerial on a tree branch, and sending out signals. The frightened boys ran away. On the same day, schoolboy K. Wigneswaran saw twenty-five tiny UFOs which landed in bushes near the school. A three-inch entity came out of each, but the school bell rang before the witness could investigate further. He was able to go back to the place on the next day, 20 August, and he saw five three-inch entities come out of a small UFO. The one who was the leader wore a yellow uniform, and also had two projections like horns on his head. When Wigneswaran tried to catch this entity, he was shot at, and fainted. Later a small red dot could be seen on his leg where he had been shot. Another boy was also shot at, with what looked like a small gun. When some boys tried to capture the entities, they just vanished.



Drawings made by schoolboys in Penang, Malaysia, who in August 1970 saw a tiny UFO with three-inch occupants. The UFO is shown here, and the strange entities (Ahmad Jamaludin/Forcean Picture Library).

Four days later, more horned entities were seen, this time at Rawang in the state of Selangor. Again the UFO landed by a school, and the

events were witnessed by children. Between August and November 1970, small UFOs also landed by schools at Alor Star (state of Kedah), Ipoh (Perak), Kampung Pandan (Selangor), and Temerloh (Pahang).⁸ Similar events occurred later in the 1970s, including further landings at Bukit Mertajam in 1973 and 1979. At Miti in Sarawak in 1973, six-inch entities wearing white suits were seen. At one time they seemed to be trying to cut fence wire with a powerful beam of light. Holiday-makers also saw similar beings on the beach, six or seven of them altogether, and some may have been females, judging by their long hair. Attempts to capture them were unsuccessful.⁹

In June 1980, tiny entities in white suits were seen at Lumut. These were described by the girl witnesses as two inches tall, very hairy and like monkeys. One was seen which wore a white hat and boots in addition to its white suit. They carried what looked like packs and a long weapon. Two details made the creatures even stranger: their feet did not seem to touch the ground; and one girl saw a big hairy creature which, as she watched it, shrank to just a few inches tall. Clearly these creatures, whatever they were, were not existing totally in our reality. There were claims that they were seen to enter a small UFO which took off, and a UFO was seen over the area three days later.¹⁰

UFOs were reported again in 1982, and boys near Sarikei (Sarawak) said they saw tiny beings with large heads near their school. Two days later a UFO as big as a classroom was seen in the same fruit plantation, with tiny entities nearby. At Paka (Terengganu) in October 1985, four-inch entities, including possibly a woman, were seen by children near their school. One child touched an entity, but had to let go its hand when his own suddenly began to itch. Throughout the 1980s, UFOs continued to be seen in Pahang, but I have no further reports of tiny entities being seen.¹¹ Very tiny entities as reported in Malaysia are very unusual, but the taller ones, three to four feet tall, are common and form a high proportion of the UFO entities seen.

The 1970s onwards have seen a change of emphasis in the activities of UFO entities. Whereas there used to be many reports of landed UFOs with entities seen outside, nowadays few such encounters are reported. Instead, many more people are claiming to have been taken

inside UFOs and there subjected to distressing physical examinations by the entities; some even claim that sexual contact with aliens has been forced on them. Argument rages as to whether these so-called abductions actually took place, or happened only in the witnesses' minds.

The abducting entities are often smaller than humans. In the case of PC Alan Godfrey, who may have been abducted while on duty at Todmorden (West Yorkshire) in November 1980, the small figures he saw were the size of five-year-old boys, or about three to 3½ feet tall.¹² Alfred Burtoo, another British abductee who was invited aboard a landed UFO while he was fishing one night in the canal at Aldershot, Hampshire, saw two figures about four feet tall, dressed in pale green.¹³

The entities who kidnapped Liberato Anibal Quintero from his home near El Banco in Colombia were described as 'less than 1½ metres [4ft 10in] in height. They were white-skinned, with flattened faces, very high cheek-bones, quite thick eyebrows, and round protruding eyes. I don't think they had either eyelids or eyelashes.' There were long-haired women among them. Quintero's case is especially worth describing, for reasons that will soon become clear. He worked as a cowman, and on this fateful evening (probably some time in the early 1970s) he had gone home from work and gone to sleep in a hammock. When he awoke, he felt that something strange was about to happen. He went outside and walked through the night towards the cowsheds, where he saw a light which seemed to be coming closer. He tried to hide, as he watched 'a big luminous craft, shaped like a hen's egg' coming slowly down, lighting up the ground and giving off a powerful heat. So afraid that he could not move, Quintero saw a number of beings come out of the craft. He tried to escape, but they took hold of him and he lost consciousness. When he came to, he found himself inside a room, and in great pain. His fear turned to amazement as he realized that three naked women were massaging him. One thing led to another, and he spent an exhausting three hours with them. He seems to have moved in and out of consciousness, and eventually found himself lying on the grass with dawn breaking. When he took his colleagues

back to the place where the UFO had been, all they found were marks on the ground.¹⁴

Quintero was one of several men, mainly in South America, who have been taken into a UFO apparently for the sole purpose of mating them with alien women. The first known case of this type featured a Brazilian, Antonio Villas Boas, who in 1957 was kidnapped on his farm. The woman with whom he was forced to mate afterwards made signs which have been interpreted as 'I will have your baby out there, on my home planet.'¹⁵

It has been suggested that the aliens are interested in producing part-human offspring because their own stock is weakening for some reason, and needs an injection of new genes. From some women abductees have also come claims that the aliens have made them pregnant and then later taken away the resulting babies. In addition to the mating of human males with alien females, and taking babies from human females, the UFO people have also reportedly performed gynaecological examinations on a large number of human females, abducted by them apparently for this purpose. Perhaps they have also taken female eggs, fertilized them outside the body, and produced children from them.

So far as I know, no proof exists that male or female humans have genuinely been used for crossbreeding, but the mere suggestion of it takes us right back to the fairies and their penchant for stealing human babies. One explanation why fairies should take human children and leave changelings in their place was given by Professor A.C. Haddon, who wrote that in Ireland, 'dwarf or misshapen children are held to be given to a mother by the fairies in place of a healthy child they have stolen from her to renew the stock of fairies.'¹⁶ This is the very same idea as has been put forward to explain why UFO entities have sometimes shown a sexual interest in humans, and it is intriguing that fairy lore and UFO lore should touch at this point, though it is only one of several features they hold in common.¹⁷

The fairies, like the UFO entities, also abducted adult humans. However, they were not always successful in their attempts, as in this account from the Isle of Man. The Reverend J.M. Spicer of Malew told

Evans Wentz at the beginning of this century:

The belief in fairies is quite a living thing here yet. For example, old Mrs K—, about a year ago, told me that on one occasion, when her daughter had been in Castletown during the day, she went out to the road at nightfall to see if her daughter was yet in sight, where-upon a whole crowd of fairies suddenly surrounded her, and began taking her off toward South Barrule Mountain; and, she added, ‘I couldn’t get away from *them* until I had called my son.’¹⁸

Had this incident been reported more recently, it might have been seen in a UFO context, Mrs K’s encounter being with UFO entities.

Fairy lore is full of tales of people being taken away into fairy-land, again a popularly believed reason being that the fairies wanted to ‘inject the dwindling stock with fresh blood and a human vigour’.¹⁹ As well as being kidnapped, humans might be lured away by offers of fairy food and drink: accepting this put the human in the fairies’ power. There are also instances of humans eating food and drink offered to them by UFO entities. Nursing mothers were borrowed to suckle fairy babies; and people with musical talent might be taken to provide the fairies with entertainment. Sometimes people who came across a ring of dancing fairies would join them, and then be unable to leave. When such a person finally stepped out of the circle, or was pulled out by friends, he would be surprised to learn how much time had elapsed while he was dancing. Just one dance (as he thought) could have taken months or even years of human time.

Other similarities between fairy lore and UFO lore include the frequent incomprehensibility of the beings’ speech. In the UFO cases given earlier, the entities were not understood by the witnesses unless, as in the case of Mrs Hingley, they ‘translated’ their words. Other descriptions of UFO entity speech include: ‘they said something that sounded like “Dbano da skigyay o dbano”’; ‘they spoke with guttural sounds’; ‘chattering’; ‘shrill sounds similar to a gargle’.²⁰ Fairy speech was described as ‘whistling, clear, not rough’ in Scotland by Robert Kirk, writing in the late seventeenth century;²¹ while Welsh fairies have been described as talking in a language the witness could not

understand, which seemed to be neither Welsh nor English.²² But sometimes, UFO entities spoke clearly in the language of the witness; and so too did the fairies.

Similarities in appearance have already been noted. Both fairies and UFO entities are often small in size, varying from a few inches to four feet; but there are also human-sized UFO entities, as there are human-sized fairies, and even giant versions of both have been recorded. The frequent use of the colour green is obvious both in UFO lore and fairy lore. The term 'Little Green Man' is used somewhat derisively to describe UFO entities, and most people do not take seriously the possibility that there exist creatures with green skin. Even ufologists, who should know better, have dismissed Little Green Men. Patrick Aymedieu, a French scientist involved in UFO research, is quoted as saying: 'People often talk of "little green men". This is nonsense, because, so far as I know, no eye-witness has ever spoken of little green men.'²³ Likewise, K. Gösta Rehn, a Swedish ufologist, said in his book *UFOs Here and Now!*: 'But ufologists have been fighting for twenty-five years, with increasing revulsion, against the pattern of "little green men", repeated intolerably by ignorant opponents of saucers. Perhaps there was a green dwarf in the forties – I have not seen one single case among thousands where the pilot was dressed in green.'

All who dismiss the concept of Little Green Men are certainly wrong to do so, for there are many accounts where eye-witnesses describe UFO entities as having green skin, or green clothing, or both. Interestingly, a number of witnesses were unable to determine whether the green colouring was of skin or clothes, or even whether the entities were clothed at all! A few examples will demonstrate what people claim to have seen.

In August 1956 in Badajoz, Spain, twenty children and ten adults saw a UFO which hovered at a height of ten feet only 150 feet away from them. They ran towards it, gesturing at the two entities they could see inside, who were also gesturing at the witnesses. The craft took off before the ebullient Spaniards got too close, but they saw the head and shoulders of two apparently naked occupants with greenish skin.²⁴

The following year a green-clad entity only 2½ or three feet tall was involved in a weird encounter at Everittstown in New Jersey. John Trasco was the main witness. At dusk on 6 November he went out to feed his dog King, and came face to face with a little man dressed in 'a green suit with shiny buttons, with a green hat like a tam, and gloves with a shiny object at the tip of each glove'. He said to Trasco in 'broken language' but obviously in English: 'We are peaceful people. We don't want no trouble. We just want your dog.' As he shouted at the entity to 'Get the hell out of here!', Trasco made a grab at him and got some green powder on his wrist, which later washed off easily; he also found some under his fingernails the next day.²⁵

Reports of green skin *and* clothing are rare, but there was one from Brazil in September 1967, when sixteen-year-old Fabio Jose Diniz encountered a landed UFO on the football pitch at Belo Horizonte. Two entities, six feet or more tall, stepped out of the craft and spoke to him in perfect Portuguese. They wore tight-fitting green clothing which covered them from head to toe, and the only skin visible was on the upper part of the face; Diniz described the skin as greenish. Two entities seen at Torrita di Siena in Italy in September 1978 also wore green clothing and had green skin, but they were shorter, only three feet or so tall. Those witnesses who saw beings with green skin described it variously as greenish, earthy green, having a green tone, mossy green, brilliant green, bright green, or simply 'green'.

Little Green Men are not just a phenomenon of the UFO 'heyday' of the 1950s and 1960s, and they have also been reported from countries whence few UFO reports have emerged, that is when compared with the United States. There were sightings of Little Green Men in Poland in 1978: in May, a 71-year-old peasant driving his cart through the woods saw two beings with green faces and wearing tight-fitting black clothing, and in September eight children saw a green-faced being, again in a tight black suit. In August 1981, still in Poland, an artist saw two entities with green faces, standing only six feet away from him so that he was presumably close enough to see them clearly.

There is certainly no doubt that green fairies and green UFO entities have been seen on numerous occasions. However, their visual

similarities are matched by their dissimilarities. All manner of physical characteristics and assorted clothing are described by witnesses of both fairies and UFO entities. One explanation for this (apart from the obvious but unlikely one that *all* the witnesses are making up their accounts) is that the creatures are appearing in a human-like form, wearing clothes, because they are consciously taking a form that the human witness will recognize and be comfortable with. In other words, the figure seen is in fact no more than an insubstantial apparition, and the beings can actually appear in whatever form they choose.

Similarly, if the UFO entities are really fairies in modern guise, the craft in which they seemingly travel (called by us flying saucers or UFOs) are only a part of the scenario in which they reveal themselves to humans. When humans see non-human beings, be they 'fairies', 'ghosts' or 'UFO entities', they need to categorize, and to assign an origin, to what they are seeing: it makes them feel in control, even if the category is no more than a label and doesn't add to their understanding of the true nature and source of the being. The people of the twentieth-century Western world have accepted the likely existence of beings on other planets, and are used to space travel. That is why the entities seen usually have a spacecraft lurking somewhere nearby, and sometimes tell humans that they come from planet so-and-so. (For more details of such reports, see an earlier book by myself and husband Colin, *Life Beyond Planet Earth?*²⁶)

The changing nature of the manifestations is revealed in the following accounts separated by 300 years, yet the essential similarities are still there. In a letter written in 1656, John Lewis of Cardiganshire (Wales) described a then-recent experience of a man he knew:

A man and his family being all in bed, about after midnight, awake in bed, he could perceive a light entring a little room, where he lay, and one after another of some a dozen in the shape of men, and two or three women, with small children in their arms, entring in, and they seemed to dance, and the room to be far lighter and wider than formerly: they did seem to eat bread and cheese all about a kind of a tick upon the ground; they offered him meat, and would smile upon him: he could perceive no voice,

but he once calling to God to bless him, he could perceive the whisper of a voice in Welch, bidding him hold his peace, being about four hours thus, he did what he could to wake his wife, and could not; they went out into another room and after some dancing departed, and then he arose; yet being but a very small room he could not find the door, nor the way into bed, until crying out, his wife and family awaked. Being within about two miles of me, I sent for the man, who is an honest poor husbandman, and of good report: and I made him believe I would put him to his oath for the truth of this relation, who was very ready to take it.²⁷

This man was visited by the Little People, and maybe he was even taken away by them, for the room seemed to change. Had this experience been recounted by a late-twentieth-century witness, it would surely have been a case of ‘bedroom visitants’ (UFO entities) and the abduction of the witness into a UFO. If this man had afterwards been hypnotized, as today’s suspected abductees usually are, there is no telling what astounding details he might have ‘remembered’ of his experience.

The ‘Little Blue Man’ seen in Bedfordshire in 1967 could have been a fairy, except for the technological trappings the child witnesses described. The seven boys, aged ten and eleven, were playing on Studham Common early in the afternoon of 28 January, as they made their way back to school. A flash of lightning and a thunderclap were followed within a few minutes by the first sighting of the entity. Alex Butler saw ‘a little blue man with a tall hat and a beard’ and immediately alerted his friends. As they ran towards the being, he disappeared ‘in a puff of smoke’. The boys searched for him, and soon saw him again, but again he disappeared when they got close. When they saw him the third time, they heard deep voices, strange and babbling. Before they could resolve the mystery and perhaps creep up on him, the teacher’s whistle called them back to school. Later, the boys described the little man as about three feet tall, and wearing a tall hat or helmet like a bowler without a brim. Details of the being’s appearance were obscured by a greyish-blue glow, but they noticed a black box about six inches square on a broad black belt, and a divided

‘beard’ which may not have been a beard. The man’s arms were short and held close to the body; the legs and feet could not be clearly seen. The boys also said that the ‘puff of smoke’ was aimed at them, and possibly came from the black box. It was a yellowish-blue mist, and although it cleared quickly, the little man may have hidden in the bushes under cover of the mist, rather than actually disappearing each time.²⁸

Changing as the times change, the entities yet stay the same. It is clear even from the few cases briefly outlined in this chapter that there are strong links between fairy lore and UFO lore, and I would go so far as to say that both are manifestations of the same phenomenon.²⁹

6

Fallen angels, pagan gods ...

Who are the Little People?

IN TRYING TO answer the question ‘Who are the Little People’, one thing is clear: the answer is neither short nor simple. As has become obvious, the term ‘the Little People’ covers a wide range of creatures, from tiny, inch-high beings to almost human-sized figures, wearing an assortment of clothing, and doing all manner of (often incomprehensible) things. It would surely tax even the most enthusiastic solver of mysteries to assign one all-embracing solution to this motley crew, yet folklorists (who are the people who have shown a serious interest in the Little People in past years) have tried – and have sometimes succeeded, in their own eyes at least. They have succeeded because they have usually ignored the evidence that didn’t fit their chosen explanation; and neither do they usually consider the possibility that their informants have been seeing ‘real’ creatures.

It is true that the majority of fairy lore told to folklore collectors by country people comprises nothing more than traditional tales, handed down through the generations, with only a handful of informants being able to offer allegedly first-hand accounts of sightings of Little People. In general, folklorists have failed to distinguish between fictional and factual accounts, perhaps believing that as fairies can’t really exist, all the stories must therefore be products of the imagination. They may be right in such a belief; but I feel that more credence should be given to those who vehemently claim to have seen an inexplicable phenomenon, whether it be the Loch Ness Monster or a little person only a few inches high. These people may be lying, they may be mistaken – or they may have seen an objectively real ‘whatever it is’. And even if only one witness has genuinely seen a tiny being a few inches tall, then there is surely a mystery to be investigated.

Because of the complexity of the Little People, a number of different explanations have been produced over the years, all with some validity but none satisfactorily explaining all the reported sightings. There are clearly different kinds of entity being seen, and each kind may possibly have a different explanation. Therefore I intend to work through them all to try and assess their relevance, all the while bearing in mind Katharine Briggs's wise words: 'On the whole we may say that it is unwise to commit oneself blindfold to any solitary theory of the origins of fairy belief, but that it is most probable that these are all strands in a tightly twisted cord.'¹

Fantasy ('imagination unrestricted by reality') plays a larger part in many people's lives than we generally realize, and people with fantasy-prone personalities will not only imagine all manner of 'facts' and events, they will believe their imaginings to be true. It seems very probable that such phenomena as UFO abductions will eventually come to be explained as the product of fantasy on the part of most (but perhaps not all ...) of the alleged abductees. The increase in reported abduction experiences over the last twenty years can easily be explained, not by saying that suddenly the aliens are abducting many more people, but by the growing media publicity given to the abduction experience. Fantasy-prone individuals latch on to the publicized scenarios and weave their own experiences, albeit unconsciously, from the raw material available to them. This explanation is certainly more feasible – and more comfortable – than the realization that alien beings are in control of mankind; though those who argue for the objective reality of UFO abductions will claim that the disbelievers simply cannot cope with that reality. These contrasting arguments point up the difficulty in proving the reality or non-reality of *any* claimed phenomenon, be it UFO abductions or sightings of Little People.²

I do believe that some people are prone to fantasize – often without realizing it – and they see things that just aren't there. They may be in an area where Little People are said to have been seen, and if they have been exposed to fairy beliefs earlier in their life, the unconscious mind

may activate the data stored in the memory and come up with a fairy image which is seen by the witness as if through his or her eyes, as apparently an objective reality. Rumour can exaggerate such occurrences. For example, in 1964 in Liverpool, rumours spread that ‘little men in white hats’ were on the bowling green in Jubilee Park, throwing mud and stones at each other. Crowds turned up to see the ‘Liverpool leprechauns’, and UFOs joined in the fun too, but no one ever seems to have discovered any fire behind the smokescreen of the rumour, which eventually died down.³

The process of seeing things that aren’t really there may be helped if the witness has been taking hallucinogenic drugs of any kind. In Ireland there are structures called sweathouses, small stone-built chambers with small doorways which would be heated with a turf fire, and then used by several naked people to induce a perspiration which would cure illnesses. Sometimes water was used to produce steam, as in the Turkish baths, but usually dry heat was preferred. Researcher Anthony Weir, who has made a study of sweathouses, suggested that they might also have had a magical function, and he refers to the Siberian and North American shamans who performed ceremonies inside circular tents which in some ways were similar to the Irish sweathouses. The Siberian shamans employed the red and white spotted fly agaric fungi (*Amanita muscaria*) which affects the mind when ingested; and Weir notes that sweathouses were most often used in the autumn, when ‘magic mushrooms’ (*Psilocybe semilanceata*) were abundant. Could the users of the sweathouses sometimes have eaten magic mushrooms, as part of the ritual? He concludes:

Although little mushroom-lore survives in Ireland, unlike Lapland, Siberia and North America, the púcaí (pixies or hobgoblins whose very name derives from Scandinavia) are as much personifications of *Psilocybe semilanceata* with their little pointed caps as of the chthonic feelings of connection which the mushroom induces. Irishmen whom I have talked to – and not old ones either – have claimed to see The Fairies after taking ‘magic mushrooms’. It is a pity that no report of sweathouse use has come from an habitué.⁴

Hallucinations can be complex, and collective, as a case from Pennsylvania shows. In August 1963 two men were trapped underground in a coal mine for fourteen days, and during that time David Fellin and Henry Throne experienced some very vivid hallucinations. They saw Pope John, a gold cross, men with lights who came in a vehicle like a chariot and were unreeling wire from a spool, and white marble stairs leading upwards. They both independently saw the same things. Other people appeared at different times, including three men who carried a plaque which bore no names, so Fellin and Throne knew they would get out alive.⁵ Compared with this, producing an imaginary fairy would be child's play for the human mind to perform!

Sometimes the mind plays tricks on us by misidentifying what the eye sees. I think we've all had this experience. For my part, I have seen a piece of paper beside the road on a dark night transformed into a dog about to run into the traffic, and a friend of mine regularly sees cows lying across the road at night. 'UFO' witnesses have mistaken the moon for a spacecraft; indeed in many UFO cases it is likely that the witness is seeing an ordinary celestial object like a star or planet and then, alert to the possibility of flying saucers, unconsciously embroiders the sight, seeing windows and perhaps even entities inside those windows. Such cases are widely documented in UFO literature.

Misidentification can also occur in the daytime, especially if the person concerned has faulty eyesight, and it is possible that animals have on occasion been mistaken for Little People. The sighting of a little old man by a French priest near Dijon in 1945 was later explained as having been a marmoset (a type of monkey) which was kept as a mascot by a regiment stationed locally. The priest could not, naturally enough, accept that explanation – yet the fact that a marmoset was kept not far from the spot where the little man was seen, and the sighting only lasted twenty seconds, and the 'little man' was moving fast, all make it very likely that the priest saw a monkey.⁶

Another misidentification may account for the Scandinavian trolls (dwarfs), a possibility suggested by professional mountaineer, author and photographer Hamish Brown:

Trollval on Rhum [Scotland] is the site of a Manx Shearwater nesting site. They nest in burrows and only come out at night – when there’s a wild bedlam. During the day [there are] only little ‘voices’ occasionally. I’m sure this is the origin of trolls. The name is often allied to Shearwater sites in the Scandinavian countries too. The Vikings were not too happy at night-outings so they’d largely only ever hear the underground voices (very human-sounding sometimes) – and no doubt could only envisage little people. Unless they dug 6 feet down they’d not know birds were in the burrows.⁷

This theory sounds feasible; and it is more than likely that a number of sightings of so-called alien beings have a very down-to-earth explanation. I myself once briefly saw a band of ‘aliens’ trooping along a country lane, as I passed the end of the lane in a car. I might have wondered to the end of my life if I had really seen aliens, if I had not immediately gone back to the lane-end for another look – and seen a group of walkers exotically clad as protection against the wet and windy weather.

It should not be forgotten of course that some sighting reports might be downright lies: the witness is not *imagining* he or she has seen fairies, he or she knows very well that the report is untrue. Pondering why people would make up reports is not likely to be productive: personal publicity (and perhaps hoped-for financial gain) and a feeling of superiority over those who believe a false story are perhaps the two main reasons. I am sure also that sometimes what began as an outright lie, consciously told, later is believed by its teller to be a true account, especially if the tale has been told many times. Unfortunately it is not always easy to distinguish deliberately untrue reports, or reports based on unconscious fantasizing, from reports of sightings of objectively real events, and we need to bear in mind that some untrue reports are going to be mixed in with the rest. After a while one develops a ‘nose’ for suspect reports, and I have deliberately omitted some suspicious ones from this book.

In addition to written reports, other evidence for fairies and Little People can be faked. Early in 1989 it was reported in the local press

that P.J. O'Hare, who owned a pub in Carlingford, County Louth, saw strange lights on the mountain one dark December morning and went to investigate, accompanied by a friend.

... as we reached the mountain gate he too saw the lights. There was no sound; only an eerie silence broken by the bark of a dog coming from the sleeping village below. We walked slowly towards the lights, conscious that darkness was turning to day-break. When we were about 300 yards from them, the lights disappeared. We continued on to where they had been and, to our utter amazement, we found these, what I can only describe as leprechaun clothes. The sovereigns were in the left hand pocket of the trousers. To the left of where the clothes lay, the ground was scorched, and on the scorched ground lay these bones. We gathered them up and headed back down the mountain, and that's it, the whole story.

The finds were later displayed, and Carlingford got lots of publicity. It later transpired that the whole story started as 'a marketing ploy to promote a village', organized by the local tourist association.⁸

This is not a new idea: in Victorian times the village of Beddgelert in North Wales put out a story that caught the imagination of all who heard it, and has since become part of the local folklore. The story concerned the dog Gelert who, in the twelfth century, was mistakenly killed by his master for killing his child, when all the time the dog was protecting the baby from a wolf. The infant, still alive, was only found after the dog had died. 'Gelert's Grave' can still be seen as 'proof' of this tale.⁹

It might be thought that a photograph should be able to provide reliable proof that fairies are real, but sadly few photographs of Little People exist, and those that do are unreliable. Either they are known to be definite hoaxes, or their provenance is unclear or suspect in some way. Considering how many people claim to have seen Little People, it is surprising that there are not more photographs claiming to show them. The most famous ones are of course the Cottingley fairy photographs. These were a series of five photographs, taken between 1917 and 1920 by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, two Yorkshire school-girls (aged seventeen and nine respectively in 1917), in the

woods by the stream behind Cottingley village near Bradford. They would probably long since have vanished unremarked had they not come to the attention of members of the Theosophical Society. Through them they were seen by Edward L. Gardner and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and thereafter received wide publicity. Many people believed the photographs to be genuine, and the girls did not immediately confess to having faked them. By the time that famous names became involved, it would have been very difficult for the children to own up without causing many people great embarrassment.

So, they kept silent for many decades, until Geoffrey Crawley, editor of *The British Journal of Photography*, embarked on a detailed study of the photographs, the results of which he published in the journal in the early 1980s.¹⁰ Finally Elsie and Frances admitted that they had created a hoax. In view of the fact that these photographs do not show genuine fairies, it is not relevant to discuss them at greater length here, but further details of this fascinating story can be found in Joe Cooper's book *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies*.¹¹ It is interesting to note, however, that Elsie and Frances claimed to the end that they *had* seen real fairies at Cottingley, and were trying to reproduce what they had seen.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Coming of the Fairies* was published a few years later, and contained intriguing photographs, including those by Else Arnhem taken in Germany in the summer of 1927, which seem to show a figure that is moving (and there may be a second figure to its right). These strange yet inconclusive images are followed by more recent ones dating from the 1970s. A photograph of Gloria Ramsey and her brother-in-law, taken at La Jolla in California, revealed a tiny human figure close to the water's edge. Whether anyone present actually saw him is not known. Also during the 1970s, several photographs of Little People have emerged from a group of witches working in Cornwall, but precise details of the circumstances in which they were obtained has proved impossible to obtain, and so I can offer no more than an 'open' verdict on them. The same applies to a photograph of a humanoid creature taken on Ilkley Moor (West Yorkshire) on 1 December 1987 by a former police officer. He claimed

to have heard a humming noise and seen ‘a small green creature moving quickly away’; it turned and waved, as if to warn him to keep away, and the witness took a quick photograph before the entity was lost to sight behind a rock outcrop. Continuing along the track, the witness saw a landed UFO, ‘like two silver saucers stuck together with a square box with holes sticking out of the top’. He did not photograph the UFO before it shot up into the sky. Later, when hypnotized, the witness described a UFO abduction by green entities. Despite intensive investigation, it has not been possible to determine whether the case is genuine or a complicated hoax.¹³ Although the creature was a UFO entity, it was green in colour, and so is certainly relevant in this round-up of fairy photographs, in view of the close links between fairies and UFO entities suggested in Chapter 5. Photographs of UFO entities are as rare as photographs of fairies and photographic evidence for the existence of either is noticeably lacking.

The most recent fairy photograph I know of was taken in 1994 on the Isle of Man, although the photographer did not see the creature at the time. John L. Hall was in Glen Aldyn near Ramsey on Sunday 4 September, walking through the wooded valley with a friend. He experienced ‘odd sensations’, ‘uncanny feelings’, and heard ‘musical sounds and tinkling voices’ – Little People or the rushing stream? He ‘sensed movement of something and also being watched by (invisible to me) someone or something’ – he felt ‘distinctly sick’ and decided to turn back. He took photographs of the area which seemed so atmospheric: on one of them, taken while the experience was happening, can be seen what John Hall describes as ‘a strange-looking green man on a pedestal’ up in the tree leaves. He adds: ‘It could be a trick of the light, of course,’ and indeed it could – but there’s no denying that in enlargements there seems to be a tiny entity among the leaves (unfortunately somewhat clearer in colour than in a black and white reproduction, which is why it is not reproduced in this book).¹⁴

In Ireland especially, the Little People were often associated with prehistoric sites, mainly forts, and a theory has developed that fairies were a memory, distant or not-so-distant, of a race of small, primitive

people who lived in the country before it was occupied by modern men. The latter gradually overwhelmed the former, who retreated back into the remotest countryside before dying out altogether. There is a strong parallel here with present-day reports of Bigfoot or Sasquatch (in North America) and his cousins elsewhere in the world, especially China and the remoter areas of the former USSR (Siberia, Pamir mountains, etc). It is widely believed among those researchers who take the reports seriously, that there are real creatures out there, that people really have seen tall, hairy, manlike beings, and that they may well represent the last few survivors of an early relative of man, perhaps Gigantopithecus. In the same way, the Little People could have come from another branch of the evolutionary tree: closely related to man, but not exactly the same and not accepted by modern man as a neighbour. Therefore they were gradually pushed back, as modern man's population expanded, until they were existing on the edge, and were nearly pushed over into extinction. Perhaps present-day reports are sightings of a few survivors of this unknown primitive race.

Pygmy tribes have existed worldwide, with reliable information available on those that have been closely studied, and anecdotal evidence being available for many lesser-known tribes, some of which are likely to have become extinct only in comparatively recent times. Examples include: the *agogwe* of Tanzania (Africa) who are four feet tall; the *séhité* of Ivory Coast (Africa) who are reddish hairy dwarfs; the *maricoxi* who were small hairy men living in the Mato Grosso area of Brazil; the *orang pendek* or *sedapa* who was a 'little man' from Malaysia; and the *dwendis* who were long-armed and hairy, living in the Belize forests (Central America). Writing of the Nittavo, the pygmies of Sri Lanka, in 1945, Wilfred Mendis described them as follows:

They were a cruel and savage race of man, rather dark in colour, small in build and living in small communities in Lenama. They built platforms in trees, covered with a thatch of leaves, and in these they lived. They could neither speak the Veddah language, Sinhalese or Tamil, but their language sounded like Telugu.

They would descend in parties from the rocks – men, women and children – walking like men but covered with shaggy hair, and would eat up the meat spread in the sun to dry, while the Veddahs, who had procured it, hid themselves from fear of attack.

Driven to desperation by the cruelties of these little folk it is said that the Veddahs had rounded them up, driven them into a cave, piled brushwood at its entrance and set fire to it for three days until they were smoked to death. Thus ended the race of Nittavo according to Veddah tradition.¹⁵

As this description shows, the race of small people is usually feared and disliked by the taller people of the region; the two rarely live in harmony together. The same reactions are repeated in the next quotation, this time describing a tribe of African pygmies.

[the lofty hills of Kwa Ngombe, Kenya] are inhabited, the Embu natives say, by buffalo and a race of little red men, who are very jealous of their mountain rights. Old Salim, the interpreter at Embu, tells with great dramatic effect how he and some natives once climbed to near the top when suddenly an icy cold wind blew and they were pelted with showers of small stones by some unseen adversaries. Happening to look up in a pause in their hasty retreat, he assures me that he saw scores of little red men hurling pebbles and waving defiance from the craggy heights. To this day even the most intrepid honey hunters will not venture into the hills.¹⁶

Did Salim really see the little red men? Or did the stones have some other origin? They might have been hailstones, or they might have been a poltergeist manifestation, with in both instances the frightened natives seeing the little red men because they expected to see them. When an area becomes peopled with dwarfs, real or imaginary, they tend to be blamed for all negative events; this is human nature all over the world.

There have been ample rumours of pygmies from enough different countries for it to be clear that, at least until recently, they were widespread, but Western anthropologists really only know about a few of the pygmy races in great detail. Some may be closely related to man; others may have more controversial backgrounds. Professor Bernard

Heuvelmans suggests that the ‘little hairy men’ seen widely in Africa could be surviving examples of *Australopithecus*, who was believed to be about four feet tall, built like a miniature man, and walked upright. They are known to have lived in South Africa around 500,000 years ago. It seems not at all unlikely that these early relations of man (and *Gigantopithecus* already mentioned, and others) could have survived until recently in unfrequented and unexplored areas of the earth. Whether they still do is doubtful, bearing in mind the way man has systematically ravaged the planet and left few regions untouched.

Supporters of the theory that at least some of the British fairies represent a primitive tribe included Professor A.C. Haddon, who in a lecture in 1894 said:

... we may regard many of these fairy sagas as stories told by men of the Iron Age of events which happened to men of the Bronze Age in their conflicts with men of the Neolithic Age, and possibly these, too, handed on traditions of the Paleolithic Age.¹⁷

Other supporters felt that the brownie, who was so often linked to a household and performed domestic tasks, could have been ‘a shaggy aboriginal hanging around the farm’,¹⁸ and Elizabeth Andrews saw souterrains or fogous as the chief dwellings of a primitive race. These were underground stone-built tunnels of unknown purpose, surviving still in various parts of Britain and Ireland. She wrote:

... tradition records several small races in Ulster: the Grogachs, who are closely allied to the fairies, and also to the Scotch and English Brownies; the short Danes, whom I am inclined to identify with the Tuatha de Danann; the Pechts, or Picts; and also the small Finns. My belief is that all these, including the fairies, represent primitive races of mankind, and that in the stories of women, children, and men being carried off by the fairies, we have a record of warfare, when stealthy raids were made and captives brought to the dark souterrain.¹⁹

Andrews also described what she heard about the fort dwellers from the local people:

The building of the forts and souterrains is ascribed by the country people to the Danes, a race of whom various traditions exist. They are said to have had red hair; sometimes they are spoken of as large men, sometimes as short men. One old woman, who had little belief in fairies, told me that in the old troubled times in Ireland people lived inside the forts; these people were the Danes, and they used to light fires on the top as a signal from one fort to another. I heard from an elderly man of Danes having encamped on his grandmother's farm. Smoke was seen rising from an unfrequented spot, and when an uncle went to investigate the matter he found small huts with no doors, only a bundle of sticks laid across the entrance. In one of the huts he saw a pot boiling on the fire, and going forward he began to stir the contents. Immediately a red-haired man and woman rushed in; they appeared angry at the intrusion, and when he went out threw a plate after him.²⁰

The Little People may have seemed to 'disappear' into the hills and forts where they dwelt, whereas they may in reality have been retreating through hidden doorways into the underground chambers or souterrains.

Those researchers who supported the theory of a primitive or aboriginal race tried to identify them with peoples mentioned in legends, or to link them with historical peoples like the Picts, but no hard proof has been produced for any of the identifications, nor is there any archaeological evidence that dwarf races ever lived in Britain and Ireland. Also counting against the recognition of the fairies as pygmy races is the fact that known pygmies also have their own fairy traditions. So although the idea of a primitive race of hairy dwarfs skulking about the remoter corners of our lands is an intriguing one, there is no real evidence to support it, and indeed much of the fairy lore, and especially the first-hand accounts I have quoted earlier, do not fit in at all with this theory.²¹

Before Christianity became the accepted religion of Britain, Ireland and the rest of Europe, the people followed cults based on nature-worship. Trees and water were both sacred, and there is evidence to suggest that they were centres of worship way back in time, perhaps

even for the earliest people. Because pre-industrial man was so reliant on the natural forces for the success of his life, it is understandable that he should have developed ways of encouraging nature to assist him; and so numerous rituals grew up which were performed at a certain time in the annual calendar. Fertility was particularly important, and many rituals which have survived in a degenerate state can be found to have originally had the theme of fertility at their heart.²²

In nature religions, powerful beings (gods and goddesses) watched over and controlled each aspect of life and the environment. Over the centuries a vast panoply of gods and goddesses grew up, each with their own characters and attributes, and their doings were woven into stories which were passed down the generations and became legends. It seems very likely that at least some of the fairy lore derives from deep-rooted memories of the old gods and goddesses. The fairies' close links with the natural environment, and especially with thorn trees, are pointers to their origins. Those folklorists who have researched into fairy origins have found many other such links.²³

One example demonstrates the process of change which has occurred. There exist Roman carvings showing figures of hooded men, these beings known as *Genii cucullati*, hooded spirits. They might wear short cloaks, with hoods which could indicate invisibility. They are thought to be land spirits; sometimes they are with a female figure who could be a fertility goddess. The hooded men could also symbolize the supernatural world, which is normally unseen by man. They could also be early depictions of what later became brownies, fairy beings who were associated with the domestic scene and helped bring prosperity (i.e. fertility) to the household.²⁴ This image of the brownie or dwarf has also survived in the form of the familiar garden gnome.

The priests and priestesses who supervised the pagan cults may also have been turned into fairies. It is not likely that a folk-memory of such people as the Druids could account for the whole range of fairy lore, but it might be one thread in the fabric.²⁵ Similarly, witchcraft practices could be remembered in fairy tales. Witchcraft itself may have its origins in pre-Christian fertility and nature worship, and witches generally prefer to perform their rites outdoors, close to nature. Their

circular rituals are echoed in the many sightings of Little People dancing in rings.

Clearly, pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices have made a strong contribution to the development of fairy life, and these themes can easily be traced in the country people's tales and memories. However, the value of these themes in explaining present-day sightings of Little People is less clearcut; indeed they may be largely irrelevant. There is a possibility nevertheless that, especially in the Celtic lands, 'the old religion' may somehow have imprinted itself on to the natural landscape in such a way that especially sensitive people may at times experience visions incorporating the main elements of the rites that used to be performed there.

The following message came through from Feda, the child control of spiritualist medium Mrs Osborn Leonard in the early years of this century, and sums up neatly the characteristics of the nature spirit category of fairies:

Yes, they do exist. They are the nature spirits and there are many classes of fairies. Clairvoyance is needed to see them. They belong to another vibration. They don't have quite the same soul as we do. But they have spirits. All forms of life are used again. Nature spirits don't die like us. Some are created out of earth or fire or friction. They are all activity and movement.²⁶

Nature spirits represent the life-force of the trees, plants and flowers, and are usually depicted as tiny, gauzy-winged creatures. They are the 'fairies' that most people understand by that word, and have unfortunately become sentimentalized. In reality they are more at home in the garden than on the chocolate box: the use of the fairy as decoration on top of the Christmas tree could be seen as an acknowledgement of her role as nature spirit. All vegetation was peopled with these elementary spirits, who were vital to proper growth and fruitfulness, but the link between nature spirits and the other fairies is by no means straightforward. As Lewis Spence succinctly put it: 'all nature spirits are not the same as fairies; nor are all fairies nature

spirits.’²⁷

One of the most interesting pointers to fairies being nature spirits is the colour green, which is the colour of plant life. Many instances of green beings will be found among the first-hand accounts quoted earlier, not forgetting the Little Green Men of UFO lore. Two further examples demonstrate the close link these tiny beings have with the plants they live among.

My only sight of a fairy was in a large wood in West Sussex ... He was a little creature about half a foot high, dressed in leaves.²⁸

I was a child of six or seven years, and then, as now, passionately fond of all flowers, which always seem to be living creatures. I was seated in the middle of a road in some cornfields, playing with a group of poppies, and never shall I forget my utter astonishment at seeing a funny little man playing hide-and-seek amongst these flowers to amuse me, as I thought. He was quick as a dart. I watched him for quite a long time, then he disappeared. He seemed a merry little fellow, but I cannot ever remember his face. In colour he was sage-green, his limbs were round and had the appearance of geranium stalks. He did not seem to be clothed, and was about three inches high, and slender. I often looked for him again, but without success.²⁹

The idea of elemental spirits living in the foliage has been perpetuated in numerous ways, including the carvings found in churches depicting ‘green men’: masculine faces with greenery sprouting from them. These can sometimes look devilish and frightening, reminding us that the nature spirit is not necessarily pretty and friendly. The folklore custom of ‘Jack in the Green’ may also embody the belief in living nature. A man would be covered by a wicker framework, into which would be woven green branches, leaves and flowers, and in this costume he would take part in May processions, to celebrate the rebirth of nature at springtime.

Another theory has it that fairies are fallen angels, lost souls or spirits of the dead.

‘What are the fairies?’ Padraic Colum asked a blind man whom he met on a West of Ireland road.

His face filled with an intensity of conviction.

‘The fairies,’ he said. ‘I will tell you who the fairies are. God moved from His seat, and when He turned round Lucifer was in it. Then Hell was made in a minute. God moved His hand and swept away thousands of angels. And it was in His mind to sweep many thousands more. “O God Almighty, stop!” said Angel Gabriel. “Heaven will be swept clean out.” “I’ll stop,” said God Almighty; “them that are in Heaven, let them remain in Heaven; them that are in Hell, let them remain in Hell; and them that are between Heaven and Hell, let them remain in the air.” And the Angels that remained between Heaven and Hell are the Fairies.’³⁰

Associating the fairies with the dead embraces several separate yet closely linked ideas, also spanning the pre-Christian and Christian religions. Seeing fairies as fallen angels is obviously a Christian concept; seeing them as the dead is likely to be pre-Christian in origin. The fallen angels were seen as devilish in nature: they were cast out of Heaven along with Lucifer their leader, and condemned to live in the hills and rocks. Devout Christians frowned on the fairies, thinking them evil. Referring to the legalization of certain games and to holidays in Wales, Edmund Jones wrote in 1779;

All Hell rejoiced in it, for there was a dreadful harvest of souls prepared for it. Now did the Fairies frisk and dance and sing their hellish music, for the darkness of ignorance and vice in which they delighted returned again and feasts of sin were made for them.³¹

Katharine Briggs also demonstrated how fairies and the Devil were linked:

The popular traits of the Devil, the horns and cloven hoof and shaggy hide, do not spring from Christian theology, but belong to folk gods or nature spirits. The early Christian missionaries, who had to deal with vast numbers of converts, adopted two methods with the beliefs and practices which they could not quite abolish. All that they felt capable of good they

sanctified, building churches where temples had been, placing saints' days upon ancient heathen festivals and occasionally identifying gods with saints. All the gods that they felt incapable of sanctification they denounced as devils or demons, and they did this increasingly as the Church gained strength, and perhaps as they found the heathen practices incompatible for Christianity. By this policy the Devil acquired many of the characteristics of the heathen gods and nature spirits.³²

The link between devils and fairies was personified in the form of Robin Goodfellow (another name for Puck), whose cloven hoofs show him to have had the attributes of a devil. The frontispiece illustration to the seventeenth-century pamphlet *Robin Goodfellow, His Mad Pranks and Merry Jest*s shows him with dancing witches ... or are they fairies? Folklorist Alfred Nutt linked Robin to ancient deities, and he has also been seen as identical to Robin Hood, who may himself originally have been a god of vegetation. The 'green men' and 'Jack-in-the-Green' are again part of this same complex tapestry, being other manifestations of the deities of the woodland.³³

In addition to being seen as fallen angels, the fairies were sometimes linked directly with the dead. In Ireland, people often believed that those who died had been taken by the Little People, therefore allowing the possibility that they might return or be retrievable. This belief is clearly seen in the story told of the Reverend Robert Kirk, who lived during the second half of the seventeenth century. In addition to his work as a priest, he was a folklorist and collected information on fairy beliefs from the Highlanders around Aberfoyle where he was born and lived. He published his material in *The Secret Common-Wealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, (the manuscript of which was produced in 1691, but first published 1815).³⁴ Kirk is said to have died on the Fairy Hill near his manse at Aberfoyle in 1692, and according to the tradition which grew up afterwards, he appeared to a relative and gave him a message, saying he was not dead but a captive in fairyland. He said he would appear at the christening of his posthumous child, and his cousin was to throw a knife over the apparition; this would break the spell, because iron has physical power against fairies, and Kirk would then

be able to return to the world. He appeared at the christening as promised, but in his amazement the cousin forgot to throw the knife and Kirk disappeared, never to be seen again.³⁵

An Irish story told to Lady Gregory parallels this account of the failed rescue attempt. A man's wife died leaving a young child. One night she returned to suckle it, but her husband kept silent on seeing her. On the second night when she came, he spoke to her: 'Why have you got no boots on?' She replied that they contained iron nails. (As noted in the Kirk story, iron was believed to have the power to repel fairies, and knives and iron crosses were used to protect against witchcraft and evil magic. Open scissors, in the shape of a cross, were hung over a child's cradle to protect it from fairy abduction.³⁶) So he took out the nails for her. On the third night when she came she was still barefoot, and told him he had left a bit of iron between upper and lower sole. She then told him how he could retrieve her. 'Come tomorrow night to the gap up there beyond the hill, and you'll see the riders going through, and the one you'll see on the last horse will be me. And bring with you some fowl droppings and urine, and throw them at me as I pass, and you'll get me again.' He went to the place, and saw her riding past, but his courage failed, and he never saw her again.³⁷

The Little People were also themselves sometimes identified with spirits of the dead, not just as beings who held the dead captive. Prehistoric burial mounds were their homes, a clear link with the dead. The fairies were perhaps thought to be small because the human soul was likewise small: in a bas-relief in an Egyptian temple, showing a queen making offerings of perfume to the gods, her *Ka* (soul) stands behind her, in the form of a little creature barely reaching her waist; and on Greek vases the human soul is seen leaving the body through the mouth and takes the form of a pygmy. In other cultures, too, the soul was depicted as a small human figure, often winged. Is it merely coincidence that this is how the fairy has been portrayed in relatively recent times? This association, in addition to folk beliefs linking the fairies with the dead, demonstrates clearly that at least some fairy lore grew out of people's conjectures about, or direct experience of, the

after-life. Sometimes fairies were half-and-half, neither one thing nor the other: 'living beings halfway between something material and spiritual, who were rarely seen'.³⁸

Lewis Spence was a strong supporter of the theory that belief in the fairies represented a cult of the dead, and his book *British Fairy Origins* contains all his arguments,³⁹ some of which I have already outlined here. His ideas are persuasive, but again the theory cannot account for every aspect of fairy lore, and especially people's direct experiences of the Little People. The fairies as the dead form an important pattern in the tapestry, but not the whole design.

Earlier in this chapter I touched on the role of imagination in the creation of sightings of the Little People. People like C.G. Jung, who have studied the depths of the human mind, have found 'little people' appearing in various guises and performing important functions for the wellbeing of humankind. It is possible that these inner dwarfs and fairies have sometimes become externalized and 'seen' in the outer world. They maybe archetypes, or symbols from the collective unconscious, and many traditional fairy tales have been interpreted in this way. They embody themes which are important to people's deep-seated needs, like the struggle to understand one's true self, the meaning of life, the fight between good and evil, the cycle of birth and death, and other eternal truths.⁴⁰ Jung studied and interpreted people's dreams, and dwarfs in particular sometimes appeared in them. Jung saw the dwarfs as:

... kinsmen of the unconscious, they protect navigation, i.e., the venture into darkness and uncertainty. In the form of the Dactyls they are also the gods of invention, small and apparently insignificant like the impulses of the unconscious but endowed with the same mighty power.⁴¹

Jung also referred to the dwarf as the 'guardian of the threshold of the unconscious'.

Psychoanalyst Dr Nandor Fodor, on the other hand, developed a theory which centred on the female womb: he saw the 'fairy mound or fairy ring' as a representation of 'the pregnant uterus'.

He who is teleported by the diminutive creatures living in the underground kingdom, is reduced to their size, which is anywhere within the size of the fetus. The enduring feasting, dancing and merry-making in which he joins is also descriptive of the life of the unborn, for whom everything is provided bountifully and without effort on its part. Time does not exist in the womb. It is a postnatal concept. The unborn, at the very best, could feel the rate of its own growth as a form of biological time. Hence, the supernatural lapse of time in Fairy Land is a fetal characteristic, and the motive for fairy fantasies is a psychological one: projection of strength unto the weak (the Little People) whom, in our inadequacy, we wish to dominate, and use thereafter as substitutes for the fulfilment of unattainable dreams of power.⁴²

Can the tapestry of fairy lore encompass two so disparate theories: that of the world of the dead and the world of the not-yet-born? It would seem that it can: all the theories in this chapter, however dissimilar and even contradictory they may appear to be, can supply a thread or two to make up the final fabric.

Some witnesses have encountered the Little People only from a distance, and have not interacted with them. Others, however, have experienced a close interaction, sometimes unpleasant (as in UFO abductions), but sometimes decidedly pleasant and beneficial. One woman actually had her own personal leprechaun, whose name was Murgatroyd. She was a patient of Dr Nandor Fodor, and first consulted him in May 1948. Murgatroyd claimed to be descended from the Tuatha de Danann, an Irish race who eventually became a fairy tribe.

He was two feet tall and was always dressed in green and tan. He usually stood three to four feet away from her, his body cast no shadow, yet she could not look through him. Once she tried to sketch him. The sketch disappeared. Barring this, Murgatroyd had never taken or brought anything, and he only appeared when she was in great distress or was very elated. He loved to ride in taxis. He was with her when she came to call on me, and approved of her visit, but he stayed below in the taxi and continued to ride in it as an invisible fare.

Through discussion, Fodor realized that the leprechaun was ‘a successful device’. Since he descended to the woman after the death of an elderly relative to whom he had formerly belonged, he represented her need to belong to a family.

The appearance (sensory or extrasensory) of the guardian spirit of the family was unquestionable evidence of the importance of her identity. As Murgatroyd only appeared at times of great distress or elation he was also a protective mechanism against manic psychosis. Beyond that, he could have been the liaison officer between herself and the Family Gestalt. Being handed down after death as an heirloom, Murgatroyd belonged less to the individual than to the family.⁴³

The scientist George Ellery Hale (1868–1938) was another adult with his own personal elf visitor. Hale made important discoveries in relation to the behaviour of the Sun, and was also interested in the Egyptian sun-god Ra; he was also a manic-depressive. On one visit to Egypt a little man suddenly appeared in his room, and began to advise him on the conduct of his life. Thereafter he often appeared to Hale in various parts of the world, his appearance being linked to a ringing in Hale’s ears. It would seem that the elf was an externalized aspect of Hale’s own personality, by means of which he could sort out his problems and take important decisions.⁴⁴

Children could also have their own personal elves which supplied psychological needs. This one visited a child at bedtime; the occurrence is described by someone who heard it in 1976.

While vacationing in Ottawa, Ontario, my wife and I met a charming young woman who told us she was the oldest child in a large family and often wanted more attention than her busy mother could give, especially while lying in bed before going to sleep. One night a little man appeared on the headboard of her bed. He wore bright-coloured clothes which consisted of a crooked hat, jacket, knee britches, woollen stockings and shoes with large shiny square buckles. She particularly remembered his eyes which were black and shiny.

She told us he was not frightening to her and when he began to tell her

stories she was delighted. He came every night for a while and told her stories until she fell asleep. Once she reached up to touch him and in a flash he had slid out of reach. He told her never to try to touch him.

Finally one night he said to her, 'This will be the last time I will come to you. Another child needs me more than you do. You will always remember me.' He vanished from her sight completely and she never saw him again.⁴⁵

All three of these Little People are unlikely to have been independent beings but to have originated deep within the minds of the witnesses and to have been externalized by them. In the following two reports the little people also provided a valuable service to the witnesses, but it is not so clear whether these beings were imaginary or whether they in fact existed independently of the witnesses.

In 1977 a Peruvian university student, Jorge Alvarez, claimed to have been saved from drowning by four little creatures. He was going down a river bank to fetch water when he fell into a swamp. He had given up hope of survival and was sinking quickly when 'four scaly little creatures of human appearance, but with three fingers on each hand' suddenly appeared and held out branches to him, with which he was pulled to safety. When he recovered, the creatures had gone. He later described them as less than three feet tall, and covered with green scales. Their hands were cold and clammy.⁴⁶

In September 1988, Ludovico Granchi, who had already had at least two strange encounters with UFOs, found himself one evening investigating some little lights he had seen in woods close to his home near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Hearing a sound like grasshoppers, he was surrounded by five little men wearing some kind of uniform. They were carrying 'wands' which had lights on their tips and which lit up the area round about. The men took Granchi into a cave, which was a large chamber with a stone 'bed' where they laid him. They examined him with the 'wands' and especially a large wound on his leg. Although the creatures talked with a sound like grasshoppers chirping, when Granchi asked them if they knew his name, one little man replied in perfect Portuguese. His voice was shrill, like a child's, and he gave the correct name. The little men, who had white skin, fair hair, dark-

green eyes and thin arms, were friendly in attitude, and gave Granchi a fruit to eat, something between an apple and a plum. On leaving the cave, he picked up a stone from the floor and took it away with him. Soon after the experience, the wound on his leg healed up, but in himself he felt 'confused and troubled', and a week afterwards still looked pale, though normally he was sunburnt.⁴⁷

This report is similar to a UFO abduction, in that the witness was taken into a bright room, but on this occasion it was a cave, and not an alien spacecraft. Could the 'cave' in fact have been fairyland? The report incorporates several features which are able to be interpreted either as fairy lore or UFO lore: the cave/spacecraft, being taken somewhere/abducted, little men (UFO entities/fairies) and the offering of food which is common to UFO lore and fairy lore. The creatures, however, were kind and friendly, characteristics not normally attributed to abducting UFO entities, and not very often to fairies, either. The feeling of 'floating in thin air' which Granchi noticed for a while after his experience echoes the feeling of unreality supposedly felt by visitors to fairyland, who lose all sense of worldly time. Did Granchi perhaps inadvertently stray into fairyland?

Those readers who were impressed by the numerous first-hand accounts quoted earlier in this book, and are now convinced that at least some of the Little People possess an objective reality, will not have been satisfied by the explanations so far provided. All can be countered by objections, and none can totally account for all the strange events allegedly experienced. My personal view is that traditional fairy lore has developed from various stimuli, namely belief in nature spirits, primitive races, pagan gods and the spirits of the dead. Personal sightings, on the other hand, could be the result of imagination, fabrication, or the externalization of unconscious archetypes. If these were the only explanations, then none of the Little People seen were objectively real.

Can this be true? I honestly do not know, and I am not going to pretend that I do, but if I were to allow myself a flight of fancy, I would speculate that *some* of the Little People *might* be 'real', and that

they live in another world which exists parallel to ours. If one cares to interpret it in that way, there is considerable 'evidence' from many sources which supports this idea. The material is so intriguing, at least to me, that I have decided to devote my final chapter to setting it out, so that other people can discuss it, perhaps enlarge on it, and maybe, just maybe, prove conclusively whether or not there is another world into which humans have occasionally strayed or been taken.

Fairyland and other worlds

IF ANOTHER WORLD operating close to our everyday world really does exist, why is it not well known to us? Why is it not recognized and understood by science, and why cannot we travel from our world to this other world at will? A partial answer to these questions may be that all 'mysteries' in some way violate accepted scientific beliefs; phenomena such as the Loch Ness Monster, ghosts and poltergeists, and fish falling from the sky, do not fit in with the accepted worldview, and are therefore not considered worthy subjects for examination by most scientists. They languish, therefore, in a scientific limbo, from which it is exceedingly difficult for them ever to be rescued. Only those people who have personally experienced such mysteries, or are open-minded enough to consider them possible, show any great interest in them, and by scientists and the general population they are relegated to that area where fact merges into fiction. Being on the fringes of knowledge, they are considered vaguely disreputable, and therefore unworthy of serious consideration.

The problem is that so many mysteries are lumped together and disregarded in this way, and it is likely that some extremely important scientific breakthroughs have been long delayed or even missed altogether as a result of scientists' refusal to examine objectively some of the data that doesn't fit in with their orthodoxy. The idea of a parallel universe, another world close to ours, is one such topic which has so far not been afforded the attention it deserves. Some physicists have theorized about such a possibility, but most are unable to accept that it might actually exist, and even less of them accept that some people have been able to cross over into the other world.

If the transition were easier, and there were more people reporting on their visits to some alternative world, perhaps scientists' interest would be aroused. From the available evidence, the other world does seem to be very close to ours, perhaps even occupying the same space, but the two rarely interpenetrate, and consequently few humans ever step from one to the

other. It is also difficult, from the evidence, to give a coherent description of the other world – and there may even be more than one of them, for there is no way of knowing if all the people who describe visits to an apparent other world have been visiting the same place. Similarly it is not always possible to determine whether the place they saw was physically objective, or solely manufactured within their imaginations. So, the search for the other world is fraught with problems, and this is possibly the most compelling reason why its existence is not generally known and accepted.

As this book is primarily about the fairies or Little People, I will first of all describe the ‘other world’ in which they live, fairyland, and people’s claims to have been there. Many descriptions of fairyland come from legend and folklore, which cannot be considered a reliable source of evidence. Nevertheless what country people believed about fairyland may have originally been derived from genuine experiences. It should be clear from the context which accounts in this chapter are factual and which legendary.

Fairyland was most commonly believed to be located somewhere underground, either in hills (natural, or prehistoric burial mounds, or ancient forts) or deep inside the earth. It was entered through holes in the ground, or simply by (apparently) passing through the solid earth, as fairies were sometimes seen to do. (Less widespread were tales of lake-dwelling fairies, though these were quite common in Celtic regions. The lake may have served as an entrance to fairyland, rather than the fairies actually living in the water.) Inside what appeared to be an ordinary green hillock, a different world was found: a subterranean palace, large rooms brightly lit, a pleasant summery landscape even though it might be winter ‘up above’. Detailed descriptions can be found in several legends describing visits to fairyland, such as the Cornish tale of Selena Moor, where a man who was lost stumbled into fairyland and there met his dead sweetheart, who warned him against touching her or eating anything or picking any flowers, for if he interacted with the fairies in any way he would not be able to return home. She had herself been captured by eating a fairy plum when she was lost on the moor, and now she had to work for the fairies. All vanished when the man turned his hedging gloves inside out, and he found himself alone in a ruined barn, where searchers later found him fast asleep.¹ Turning his gloves inside out was akin to turning one’s coat inside out, once a familiar act performed by someone who felt himself to be ‘pixy led’

and unable to find his or her way out of a field, for example. It may originally have been done to confuse the fairies, perhaps to make them think this was a different person.

In the story of St Collen, the role of fairy food in capturing humans is also featured. Collen was a seventh-century Welsh saint who spent part of his life in Somerset, living as a hermit at the foot of Glastonbury Tor. He was invited to visit the King of the Fairies, who had his castle on top of the hill, and when St Collen accepted he made a point of carrying a container of holy water hidden under his cassock. On top of the Tor he entered a beautiful castle where a banquet was taking place, and the King invited him to join them. He refused to eat, saying, 'I do not eat the leaves of a tree' – not being under the fairy influence, he saw the food for what it really was. Telling the King that his courtiers were suitably dressed – in red for the flames and blue for the ice of Hell – he threw holy water over them all, whereupon the castle and banquet vanished and he was alone on the Tor.² If St Collen had eaten the fairy food offered to him, he would have fallen under their spell and been unable to leave fairyland.

A tale from Wales, set 400 years later, describes the boy Elidorus and his frequent visits to fairyland. The details were recorded by the archdeacon Giraldus Cambrensis, who wrote a book about his journey through Wales in 1188, and the story can be dated to the previous century. When he was twelve and a schoolboy, Elidorus was often beaten by his tutor, so he ran away and hid under a hollow river bank.

After fasting in that situation for two days, two little men of pigmy stature appeared to him, saying, 'If you will come with us, we will lead you into a country full of delights and sports.' Assenting and rising up, he followed his guides through a path, at first subterraneous and dark, into a most beautiful country, adorned with rivers and meadows, woods and plains, but obscure, and not illuminated with the full light of the sun. All the days were cloudy, and the nights extremely dark, on account of the absence of the moon and stars. The boy was brought before the King, and introduced to him in the presence of the court; who, having examined him for a long time, delivered him to his son, who was then a boy. These men were of the smallest stature, but very well proportioned in their make; they were all of a fair complexion, with luxuriant hair falling over their shoulders like that of women. They had horses and greyhounds adapted to their size. They neither ate flesh nor fish, but lived on

milk diet, made up into messes with saffron ... The boy frequently returned to our hemisphere, sometimes by the way he had first gone, sometimes by another; at first in company with other persons, and afterwards alone, and made himself known only to his mother, declaring to her the manners, nature, and state of that people.

His mother desired some gold, which Elidorus tried to steal for her, but two of the little people retrieved the gold ball from him, and afterwards Elidorus could never again find the entrance to fairyland. He later became a priest, and told David II, the Bishop of St David's, of his experiences, including details of the fairies' language, which resembled both Welsh and Greek.³

Elidorus's tale lays claim to be based on factual events, as also does the story of Anne Jeffries, a Cornish girl who lived in the seventeenth century in St Teath parish. She was a servant and, wishing to make friends with the fairies, she would occupy her free time looking for them among the flowers. One day they showed themselves to her in her master's garden and carried her away through the air to a beautiful land with palaces of gold and silver, and trees full of fruit, where she joined in with the dancing. She was now the same size as the Little People, though previously they had been smaller than her. Eventually they took her home, and she was found lying on the ground, seemingly having suffered a fit. Although she never visited fairyland again, Anne Jeffries continued to have dealings with the Little People, for which she was imprisoned and charged with witchcraft.⁴

Two further seventeenth-century claims to have visited fairyland came from Scotland. A boy from Borgue would be away for several days at a time, visiting 'our folks', as he called them. The priest gave him something to frighten the fairies away: a cross on black ribbon which he hung around his neck; and he was never taken away again. Folklorist J.F. Campbell, who recorded this tale in the 1890s, concluded: 'some of the oldest men now alive remember that boy as an old man. The whole affair is recorded in the books of the kirk-session of Borgue, and can be seen any day.'⁵

A boy from Leith, Edinburgh, also regularly visited the fairies, and he was interviewed by George Burton some time in the seventeenth century. The boy said he played the drum for the fairies every Thursday night 'under yonder hill'. Burton asked him about the fairy people.

There are, sir, said he, a great company both of men and women, and they are

entertained with many sorts of musick, besides my drum; they have, besides, plenty of variety of meats and wine, and many times we are carried into France or Holland in a night, and return again, and whilst we are there we enjoy all the pleasures the country doth afford.

Burton also asked how he got into the hill.

To which he replied that there was a great pair of gates that opened to them, though they were invisible to others; and that within there were brave large rooms, as well accommodated as most in Scotland.

Burton tried to detain the boy when the time came for him to join the fairies.

He was placed between us, and answered many questions, until, about eleven of the clock, he was got away unperceived by the company; but I, suddenly missing him, hastened to the door, and took hold of him, and so returned him into the same room; we all watched him, and, of a sudden, he was again got out of doors; I followed him close, and he made a noise in the street, as if he had been set upon; but from that time I could never see him.⁶

In Ireland, several of the people interviewed by Lady Gregory claimed to have visited fairyland. One was an old lady called Mrs Sheridan, who said:

I know that I used to be away among them myself, but how they brought me I don't know ... Where they brought me to I don't know, or how I got there, but I'd be in a very big house, and it was round, the walls far away that you'd hardly see them, and a great many people all round about. I saw there neighbours and friends that I knew, and they in their own clothing and with their own appearance, but they wouldn't speak to me nor I to them, and when I'd met them again I'd never say to them that I saw them there. But the others had striped clothes of all colours, and long faces, and they'd be talking and laughing and moving about. What language had they? Irish of course, what else would they talk?

Mrs Sheridan also described an important woman with 'a tall stick in her hand', who was 'the mistress', and who touched Mrs Sheridan on the

breast with her stick when she cried to go home. Sensibly, Mrs Sheridan refused to touch the food and wine they offered her, though sometimes she would have to breastfeed a child for them.⁷

People accused of witchcraft also sometimes said that they had visited fairyland, including Isobel Gowdie whose story I told here. Another witchcraft connection was revealed when a Yorkshire man was tried for practising white witchcraft. He claimed to perform his healing art by means of a white powder he received from the fairies, obtaining it by going to a certain hill and knocking three times, whereupon he gained access and was given the powder he needed. He explained how he had first met the fairies, and was taken to see their Queen. He described the 'Hall' inside the hill as neither light nor dark but like twilight. Because he had indeed performed reliable cures, the judge and jury acquitted him.⁸

Some early accounts of fairyland have been obtained from medieval chronicles which were compiled by monks, for example the story of Elidorus quoted here. Both Ralph of Coggeshall and William of Newbridge wrote about the Green Children of Woolpit in Suffolk, whose journey here from another world was said to have taken place during the reign of King Stephen, that is, in the middle of the twelfth century. Because of its strange details, and its obvious link with fairies, the tale is worth recording in full here, using Ralph's version.

Another wonderful thing happened in Suffolk, at St Mary's of the Wolfpits. A boy and his sister were found by the inhabitants of that place near the mouth of a pit which is there, who had the form of all their limbs like to those of other men, but they differed in the colour of their skin from all the people of our habitable world; for the whole surface of their skin was tinged of a green colour. No one could understand their speech. When they were brought as curiosities to the house of a certain knight, Sir Richard de Calne, at Wikes, they wept bitterly. Bread and other victuals were set before them, but they would touch none of them, though they were tormented by great hunger, as the girl afterwards acknowledged. At length, when some beans just cut, with their stalks, were brought into the house, they made signs, with great avidity, that they should be given to them. When they were brought, they opened the stalks instead of the pods, thinking that beans were in the hollow of them; but not finding them there, they began to weep anew. When those who were present saw this, they opened the pods, and showed them the naked beans. They fed on

these with great delight, and for a long time tasted no other food. The boy, however, was always languid and depressed, and he died within a short time. The girl enjoyed continual good health; and becoming accustomed to various kinds of food, lost completely that green colour, and gradually recovered the sanguine habit of her entire body. She was afterwards regenerated by the laver of holy baptism, and lived for many years in the service of that knight (as I have frequently heard from him and his family), and was rather loose and wanton in her conduct. Being frequently asked about the people of her country, she asserted that the inhabitants, and all they had in that country, were of a green colour; and that they saw no sun, but enjoyed a degree of light like what is after sunset. Being asked how she came into this country with the aforesaid boy, she replied, that as they were following their flocks, they came to a certain cavern, on entering which they heard a delightful sound of bells; ravished by whose sweetness, they went for a long time wandering on through the cavern, until they came to its mouth. When they came out of it, they were struck senseless by the excessive light of the sun, and the unusual temperature of the air; and they thus lay for a long time. Being terrified by the noise of those who came on them, they wished to fly, but they could not find the entrance of the cavern before they were caught.⁹

Katharine Briggs notes that ‘beans are traditionally the food of the dead’, and green is ‘the Celtic colour of death’.¹⁰ It is also, of course, a colour very often associated with the Little People, and sometimes with so-called UFO entities.



A man who foolishly joined the fairy dance is pulled back to safety by a friend (Fortean Picture Library).

The entrance to the children's world was through a cave, and the light was like our twilight, as in the witchcraft case (see here) and also the story of Elidorus (see here). The girl called her country St Martin's Land and said that the people who lived there were Christians, according to William of Newbridge's version of the story. St Martin's Land is clearly also fairyland, the other world which sometimes briefly links up with our own world, allowing people to stray from one into the other, but not always giving them time to get back again.

Even though not always agreeing in details, the descriptions of fairyland tend to agree in generalities: it is often reached through a hill or a hole in the ground; and when the fairy world is entered it is a beautiful place with fine buildings, perfect in every way. Those whose descriptions I have so far given, seemed to be able to come and go at will; but usually in folklore, those who were foolish enough to eat any fairy food or in some other way to interact with the fairies were thereafter held captive, unable to return voluntarily to their normal life.

Sometimes it was the fairy music and dancing which attracted the human

so that he felt compelled to join the Little People in the fairy ring. Once inside he could not escape – though indeed he rarely wished to, for the experience was so enjoyable. In the folk tales, friends would rescue him some long time afterwards, a year or two even. He would be pulled out by his clothes, the rescuer making sure not to enter the circle, or he would be touched with a piece of iron before being dragged out (the importance of iron as a protection against the fairies has already been noted). The released man would believe he had only been dancing for five minutes, not a year or more: one man was told to look at his ‘new’ shoes, and saw they were now in pieces. Only then was he convinced of what his friends had been trying to tell him.¹¹

Sometimes the visitor to fairyland is away for very much longer, perhaps 200 years of earth time, though only a short time was seemingly spent in fairyland. In a Scottish tale, two fiddlers entered a hill near Inverness and played for a fairy gathering which lasted a few hours, but when they returned home they were amazed to find that a hundred years had passed. They went to church but, when the priest began to read the gospel, they crumbled into dust. This sometimes also happens when the person returns home and eats some food. Katharine Briggs interpreted these events as indicating that fairyland is ‘a world of the dead, and that those who entered it had long been dead, and carried back with them an illusory body which crumbled into dust when they met reality.’¹² In one tale, however, a man who spent many happy years in fairyland broke a prohibition when he drank from a certain well, and immediately found himself back in Pembrokeshire (Wales) on the hillside with his sheep. Only minutes of earth time had passed.¹³

Being in a state of trance can sometimes bring about a mistaken concept of the passage of time. People who have been close to death by drowning or other sudden accidents, but are later revived, have claimed that ‘their whole life flashed before them’ in a very short space of time. Also, drug-taking can cause a person to experience or dream events that seemingly last a long time: nineteenth-century author Thomas de Quincey who took opium and wrote of his experiences in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* recorded dreams lasting ten to sixty years. People who have had inexplicable UFO experiences sometimes find difficulty in reconciling the time: they often find that they have ‘lost’ an hour or two. A journey which normally took, say, two hours, on the day in question took four, and the

witness is at a loss to explain what happened during the missing two hours. When he or she is later hypnotized, it may be found that a UFO abduction took place, the details of which have been erased from the victim's memory.¹⁴ This experience parallels that of the visitor to fairyland who found that in the 'real world' more time had passed than he or she seemed to have experienced.



Shon ap Shenkin turns to dust on returning home after spending a few minutes, as

he thought, but in reality many years listening to fairy music (Fortean Picture Library).

The image of the human happily dancing with the fairies, while outside the ring his friends plan their rescue attempt, clearly demonstrates how close is the world of the fairies to our world. The rescuers can see the dancer, but he is living in a different world, with a different time-scale. The closeness of the fairy world to the human world often occurs in accounts of the Little People, with the difficulty of crossing from one to the other, especially from the fairy to the human world, being emphasized. These features occur in a story told to Evans Wentz by an Irish tailor, Patrick Waters:

A girl in this region died on her wedding-night while dancing. Soon after her death she appeared to her husband, and said to him, 'I'm not dead at all, but I am put from you now for a time. It may be a long time, or a short time, I cannot tell. I am not badly off. If you want to get me back you must stand at the gap near the house and catch me as I go by, for I live near there, and see you, and you do not see me.' He was anxious enough to get her back, and didn't waste any time in getting to the gap. When he came to the place, a party of strangers were just coming out, and his wife soon appeared as plain as could be, but he couldn't stir a hand or foot to save her. Then there was a scream and she was gone. The man firmly believed this, and would not marry again.¹⁵

In the modern world, strange events sometimes occur which might be indicative of our world's closeness to another world, one which we cannot normally see, but which nevertheless interacts with ours. People who are psychic are the most likely to be able to see events occurring on another level of existence. We may be sharing our living space with all manner of strange creatures that we cannot normally see. Mrs Claire Cantlon, one-time secretary of the Faery Investigation Society, told psychologist Dr Nandor Fodor of her own experiences.

My house and garden in Putney are overrun by fairies and gnomes. The other day, Robin, my boy of ten, ran to me in great fright. He thought there was a pig in the room. It was a fat gnome, sitting on the chair, looking very cross and grunting. A few days after I heard the noise myself. It was a blend between the growling of a dog and grunting of a pig. I thought it was the dog going at the

cat. Last week I saw the gnome. Just as I was putting out the light, I noticed a queer shape trying to climb up the blind cord and fall with a fearful flop. He glared at me, for I had an impulse to laugh, and vanished.

June, my 11-year-old daughter, who is very psychic, saw some little time ago a gnome in a circle of light, sitting on the knob of a bedpost and hammering at a ring. He wore a cloak and had a long, white beard.¹⁶

People who are not psychic, however, might still be unexpected witnesses to events which may hint at the existence of another world. We may not all be able to see fairies or the Little People, because they are normally invisible to us, but there may be occasions when they acquire partial visibility and so are seen fleetingly before the conditions become unfavourable again. I regret that for those of a scientific frame of mind I cannot provide any details of the mechanism that allows for invisibility or partial materialization: I will leave that aspect of other worlds for the scientists themselves to tackle. All I can provide are the case histories, the facts as described by the witnesses. For example, in the mid-eighteenth century, the Reverend Robert Hughes was returning home along the Pwllheli road to Llanaelhaearn on the Lleyn peninsula (Gwynedd, Wales) early one morning when he saw fairies riding on tiny horses. He told of his encounter to Dr John Rhys, who retold it in a book of Celtic folklore: 'his recollection is that he now and then mastered his eyes and found the road quite clear, but the next moment the vision would return, and he thought he saw the diminutive cavalcade as plainly as possible.'¹⁷ Similarly in the last century, someone living in the Isle of Man saw the fairies briefly:

About 34 years ago, when he was 23, at 10 a.m. of a brilliantly sunny summer morning he was walking on the short grass below the debris at the west side of the Glen Aldyn slate-quarries, which lie far above the inhabited part of the Glen. Here he came to a sudden stop to avoid stepping on something alive between two and three yards in front of him. It was five little creatures dancing in a ring, hand in hand. They stood a foot or 18 inches high and were greyish in colour like fungus, their bodies seeming to be swollen in front, their limbs and eyes clearly distinguishable, and their heads moving as they danced. He speaks of them as 'little men' because they gave him a strong impression of being of the male sex. After he had watched them for a short time they vanished from his sight, and there was nothing there but the grass. Thinking his eyes or brain might have played him a trick, he went to the same spot a

couple of mornings later, and there they were again, just as before. He has hardly ever spoken of it to anyone for fear of ridicule.¹⁸

Just because the Little People suddenly disappear, or are there one minute and gone the next, and then later return, does not mean that the witness's vision is to blame, or that he or she is imagining things. In fact such sightings, seemingly on the edge of visibility, provide clues to the ways and circumstances in which humans see these elusive creatures. In 1912, Dr Robert Ernst Dickhoff also saw Little People who disappeared, but on this occasion they did it slowly.

An incident that occurred in 1912, when I was eight years old and lived in a suburb of Cologne, Germany, has remained indelibly in my memory. One afternoon I was looking out into the backyard from a window of our apartment. My mind was in no way keyed to the forces and powers of the paranormal – I was merely looking out of a window to see what could be seen.

Behind me was a large fourposter bed. I was alone in the room, but I felt compelled to turn around. I did so, and saw, sitting against the posts of the bed, two strange creatures which could not have been more than three and a half feet tall if standing.

They looked exactly alike, had features just like humans and skin of a lightbrown texture. They did not smile and therefore I could not see if they had teeth. If they wore clothing, it must have been the same colour as their skin and worn tightly over their bodies. It appeared to me, however, that my strange visitors were naked.

I do not know how long the creatures had studied me before I turned. But after we had gazed at each other for about a minute a fantastic thing happened. Apparently having realised that I was able to see them, they faded slowly into invisibility before my astonished eyes. I never saw them again – but that may be because they have been careful to remain invisible when around me.

I've always wondered whether my strange visitors were extraterrestrials, possibly from a flying saucer, although I saw no saucer anywhere at the time of my experience.¹⁹

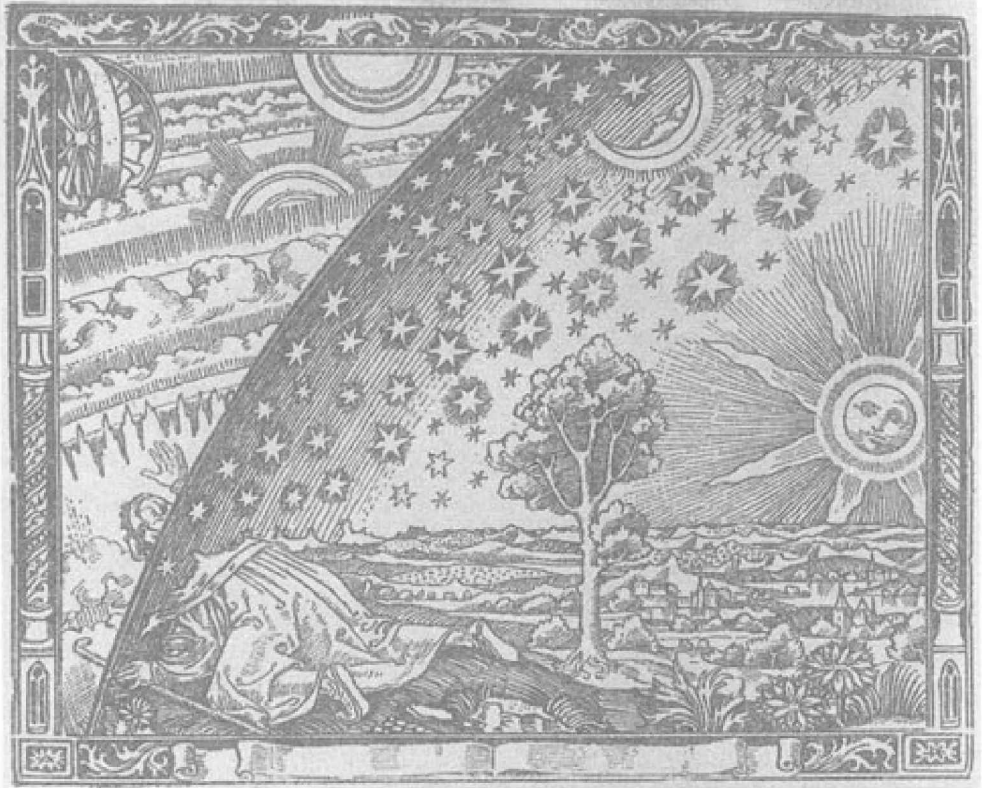
Some UFO experiences seem to suggest that the 'spacecraft', as some people believe them to be, may not be totally solid. Jennifer F. Canfield was sitting on the front porch with her husband at their home at Callicoon on the New York/Pennsylvania border, on 3 July 1977. The sky was

overcast and the time was around 7.30 p.m. They saw a 'brilliant light' approaching soundlessly, and Mrs Canfield fetched a pair of binoculars. Through them she could see a solid craft with two huge headlights. It had a 'cockpit' like an inverted cone, and the craft was grey or off-white. She continued:

Several people were lucky enough to see the object through the binoculars. As it came within less than half a mile from our home, my husband remarked, 'Don't tell me I'm finally going to get a ride in a flying saucer!' Almost as if it had been given a stage cue, the saucer disappeared. It did not fly up, down or veer right or left. It simply disappeared! As I said, the sky had been overcast and the clouds were very low. The saucer was below these.²⁰

A few years earlier, in the summer of 1972, a man fishing in a stream at Buckingham in England saw a cigar-shaped object reflected in the water – but there was nothing to be seen in the sky. Looking again at the water, he could see the reflection of a pewter-coloured object with rounded ends, and watched it moving. Again he checked the empty sky. Then, after twelve seconds, the object turned and vanished.²¹ A somewhat similar experience happened to myself and husband Colin in July 1983. We were standing on a bridge over the Worcester and Birmingham Canal in the English Midlands, taking photographs of the canal, the pub alongside, and the boats on the water. It was a hot day, with a cloudless blue sky. We saw nothing unusual, but days later, when we received the transparencies back from being processed, one had a strange white 'cloud formation' in the sky. None of the frames preceding or following, all taken within a short space of time, showed anything unusual. There was just one frame with an object looking for all the world like a misty cigar-shaped UFO. If it was a UFO, it was not visible to the human eye. If it was a cloud, it came and went within seconds. Nor has anyone been able to explain the image convincingly as a fault in the film or the processing; it remains a mystery. On this occasion, it may be that the film recorded something only visible on a certain wavelength, one not shared by the human eye. Cameras also sometimes capture ghostly figures not seen by the photographer. This suggests that in certain circumstances, aspects of the 'parallel world' may be caught on film, but it is no use going around taking photographs and expecting them to show 'invisible' people – the rarity of this happening indicates that only very occasionally are the conditions (whatever they may be) right for this

event to occur.



This old engraving shows a pilgrim discovering another world. To the right is the everyday world, from which the pilgrim has broken through the barrier to a different world, separated from ours, but close at hand (Fortean Picture Library).

If the ‘other world’, the ‘parallel world’, or fairyland, whatever one likes to call it, is indeed very close, it may be separated from us only by a thin barrier, but that barrier proves almost impossible for mere mortals to penetrate, unless by chance we fulfil the right conditions for a moment or two, and catch a quick glimpse of what is on the other side. There may normally be too much clutter in our minds to allow us to get on to the correct wavelength, or into a receptive frame of mind. Using the ‘barrier’ image might be a bit misleading, if the ‘other world’ operates in the same space as our everyday reality, for in that case the barrier takes on a more insubstantial form: our own lack of knowledge of the correct viewing

conditions. That is why we sometimes ‘see’ without expecting to.

Although these ideas are hypothetical, and based entirely on a few strange experiences, similar reports can be found in other parts of the world, and these experiences are suggestive of something unusual occurring: we are tantalized by brief flashes of clarity, a momentary glimpse of another existence, and then all is ‘back to normal’. Most people can recall at least one odd event that seems to have no logical explanation, however hard they try to find one. Household objects disappear and reappear in a different place, almost as if a mischievous entity is playing games; or sometimes the ‘entity’ is helpful, like the household brownies of the fairy tales. In the late 1950s a vicar and his wife stayed in a Devon cottage. One day the wife prepared a stew and was going to light the fire and put the stew on, but something distracted her and they went out. On returning home, expecting to have to eat bread and cheese for supper, they found that the fire had been lit and the stew was cooked. They had been within sight of the house all day, and no one had come near, nor had they seen smoke. On another day, she forgot to take the evening meal off the fire. By the time she remembered it, it should have been burnt, but she found that it had been taken off the stove. Another time, while sitting outdoors in the heather to do some sewing in the sun, she lost two needles, and the needlebook also disappeared.²²

In a similar case, a woman who for years ran a village post office and shop in rural Wales had an invisible helper. Every morning, she would get up to find that the previous day’s muddle in the shop had been tidied up. She commented,

I never really understood the meaning of it. But I was grateful right from the very first, so it became a habit with me never to pry too much into the whys and wherefores. I thanked whoever it was aloud every working morning. I began to call him – if it was a him – Billy, just to give him a bit of personality. And he never let me down once. When I retired, Billy went. No need for his services, see.²³

These events cannot, of course, be directly attributed to the fairies but they are the sort of things that the fairies would be expected to do. I had a somewhat similar experience myself, while writing this book, and it continues to puzzle me. Our house, in the North Wales hills, was approached along a track across two fields and through three gates. On the

morning of 1 February 1991, there was ice on the ground at the ‘bottom’ gate into the lane, and when I had opened the gate I had to back the car into the lane and take a run at the entrance, because the track goes uphill. Once through the gate I had to keep going, for to stop to close the gate would have meant the car would be unable to move again on the icy ground. I drove across one field and into the next (the gate was open) and stopped on a level area where there was no ice. I was by now out of sight of the lane gate, and had to hurry back to close it before the sheep escaped. Only a minute elapsed between driving through the lane gate and walking back into sight of it: and I was very surprised to see that the gate was closed. I still had to walk down the field to it, to check that the latch was in place, and it was. It was impossible for the gate to have been blown shut by the wind, for there was none, and when open the gate dragged on the ground. I had definitely not stopped to close it myself, and the only possibility is that someone else closed it for me. There had been no one in sight when I drove along the lane only three or four minutes earlier, and as I now stood by the gate pondering the mystery, I looked along the lane and saw no one. They could not have disappeared out of view in such a short time. There was a neighbour from the village who walked his dog along the lane and would open and close the gate for me if he happened to be there when I needed to drive through; but I had not seen him on this particular morning. I did happen to see him the very next day, and asked if he had closed the gate for me the day before, but he said he had not. Until someone else owns up to skulking in the bushes unseen by me, I can only assume that some invisible hand closed and latched the gate.

I say ‘invisible’ because in addition to seeing no humans I also saw no fairies – but then I don’t claim to possess any greater degree of psychic sensitivity than most of the rest of the population; and the evidence suggests that people who *are* psychic have a greater chance of seeing fairies and also of experiencing other so-called ‘paranormal’ events. Children tend to be more psychic than adults, and the numerous cases already quoted of children seeing Little People support this belief. Perhaps their minds are less cluttered than adults’ and more open to outside influences – they instinctively allow their natural psychic abilities free rein, whereas adults tend to stifle them – so, when children are in the right place to see the fairies, they are likely to do so, though many adults in the same situation would very likely not see anything.

A case demonstrating the receptivity of children occurred in the 1870s on the island of Skye, where three children were being looked after by their grandmother. An old lady came to visit, and she offered to show them something interesting. It was twilight, and she took them along a path by the burn. Stopping, she said, 'Look, do you see them?' On the hillside they saw fairies dressed in green, dancing in a ring around a fire. Next day the children went out to look for the ashes of the fire, but there was nothing to be seen. The old lady who took them was said to possess 'second sight', a Scottish term referring to the possession of psychic powers and the ability to see into the future.²⁴

Maybe the children would have been able to see the Little People if no one had been with them, if they had stumbled accidentally across the ring of fairies. Or maybe the old lady was somehow able to pass on to them her psychic ability. There are numerous instances in the literature of people who are psychic being able to transfer that ability by means of some special action. For example, one of Evans Wentz's informants told him:

There used to be an old man at Newchurch named David Davis (who lived about 1780–1840), of Abernant, [Carmarthen, Wales] noted for seeing phantom funerals. One appeared to him once when he was with a friend. 'Do you see it? Do you see it?' the old man excitedly asked. 'No,' said his friend. Then the old man placed his foot on his friend's foot, and said, 'Do you see it now?' And the friend replied that he did.²⁵

The four-leafed clover was also said to be able to help humans to see fairies, and the leaves were also an ingredient of a special ointment made by the fairies which could be used by humans on their eyes to enable them to see the Little People.²⁶ The fairies however, had ways to prevent humans seeing them: a fairy blew on the face of a man who said he could see them, and he never saw them again.²⁷ Another fairy spat in the eyes of a man who saw 'a great crowd of little fellows in red coats dancing and making music' near Jurby, Isle of Man. She said to him, 'You'll never see us again' – and he was blinded thenceforth. The man's grandson told his story to Evans Wentz, saying that his grandfather had definitely had good sight in his youth, and was totally blind for fourteen years before his death, but added: 'I am unable to say of my own knowledge that he became blind immediately after his strange experience, or if not until later in life; but as a young man he certainly had good sight, and it was believed that the fairies

destroyed it.’²⁸ It was believed that if you did see the fairies you had to keep looking at them, for if you blinked or looked away, they would disappear. Or as one Irish informant expressed it to Evans Wentz: ‘But the minute you wink or take your eyes off the little devil, sure enough he is gone.’²⁹

Apart from possessing psychic ability, or being lucky enough to find a four-leafed clover, there are other important requirements to be fulfilled: you have to be in the right place at the right time. You need to know where the fairy haunts are (see the Appendix), and to be there at the good times: twilight, midnight, the hour before sunrise, and noon – the ‘four hinges of the day’. Important times of year are May Day, Midsummer Eve, and Hallowe’en, when ‘the doors open between the worlds’.³⁰ Places that were held sacred in ancient times, like stone circles, standing stones and burial mounds, are thought to be ‘naturally charged with psychical forces’,³¹ and so are good places to see the Little People. It may be that the rock used by the ancients to build these sites was very important: quartz is often seen at such sites, for example, and its piezo-electric properties have caused researchers into earth energies to wonder if it was chosen for its special qualities – perhaps its ability to assist those performing rituals at the sites to enter into another dimension of being? Certainly people have reported strange experiences at ancient sites, and in connection with quartz. One was ley researcher Paul Screeton, who wrote of seeing an ‘elemental’ (a nature spirit or disembodied spirit). He was walking along a road near Carlisle, and he stepped on to a quartz stone on the grass verge. He bent down to look at it more closely.

I touched it for about half a minute and then walked a couple of paces. Then I saw something move a yard or so in front of me. The thing leapt like a frog and was frog-shaped, but about three feet high. It was brown but its form was hazy, difficult to describe, but the effect was not dissimilar to a television screen when the lines go crazy. I had the impression that what I had seen was an elemental and that I perceived it at the edge of my consciousness.

He interpreted it as an ‘earth gnome’, and believed it possible that ‘the quartz itself was instrumental somehow in bringing about the sighting, i.e. raising my consciousness while I touched it.’³²

Quartz rock may also be involved in some electro-magnetic effects which manifest as balls of light, these often being interpreted as UFOs or

‘alien spacecraft’. The electro-magnetic energy which is emitted might possibly cause hallucinations in witnesses, so that they ‘see’ all manner of strange things, including landed craft, entities, etc. Sometimes light or lights are a feature of Little People sightings, and it is conceivable that the same mechanism is in operation: the witness is having hallucinations triggered by the outpouring of energy from the light. Alternatively, of course, the appearance of the Little People might be due to the presence of the light and/or energy, in that the curtain between this world and the other world parts under influence of the energy forces.

A report from Cornwall dating from the mid-nineteenth century may demonstrate the potential link between lights and seeing the Little People. A man returning home from market, and passing between dense hedges, saw a light and heard music and singing. Looking through the hedge, he saw an elf sitting on a toadstool. He held a lantern formed from a campanula flower, from which poured a greenish-blue light. A group of fairies was dancing in a ring. The man described what he did:

I looked and listened awhile, and then I got quietly hold of a great big stone and heaved it up, and I dished in amongst them all, and then I up on my horse and galloped away as hard as I could, and never drew rein till I came home to Morwenstow. But when the stone fell among them all, out went the light. You don’t believe me? But it be true, true as Gospel, for next day I went back to the spot, and there lay the stone, just where I had dished it.³³

Clearly he saw something, else why throw a stone, and then return to the spot later? What really happened here? Was what he saw objectively there, with the light simply a fairy lantern? Did he come under the influence of some electro-magnetic energy which caused him to see the fairies who were really there, the lantern being the light from the power source? Or did he perhaps hallucinate the elf and dancing fairies when he came under the influence of an electro-magnetic discharge?

If electro-magnetism and other forms of energy do have a part to play in so-called fairy sightings, with the events being purely hallucinatory, the variety in the appearance of the fairies is explainable as being an externalization of the fairy image stored within the witness’s memory. Another explanation, though, is that the Little People themselves influence how humans see them. They were said to exercise ‘glamour’ – ‘a mesmerism or enchantment cast over the senses, so that things were

perceived or not perceived as the enchanter wished', as defined by Katharine Briggs. The fairy ointment or four-leafed clover could be used to negate the glamour.³⁴ Fairies were also credited with being accomplished at 'shape-shifting', changing their appearance at will. This all makes sense if the Little People do indeed live in another world close to ours, where the vibratory rate is different from ours and they need to consciously materialize in our world in order to be seen by humans. We can never see them as they really are, owing to the difference in the rates of vibration in our separate worlds. UFO entities too have indicated that their appearance while on Earth is temporary, or even illusory. One witness was told that he would see the being 'only as I wanted to see it. If I wanted to see the being resemble a duck, it would look like a duck! If I wanted the being to look like a monster, it looked like a monster!'³⁵

It is of course difficult (probably impossible) to *prove* that UFO entities, and other unexplained beings like fairies, live in another world close to ours, and can materialize and dematerialize in our world at will in whatever form they choose. The fact of materialization is itself controversial, though there is some convincing evidence, mainly from poltergeist cases, that solid objects, and on occasion even people, have indeed dematerialized and rematerialized somewhere else. In an extraordinary poltergeist case which happened in India in 1928, Miss H. Kohn, of German origin and teaching languages in a Poona college, witnessed many strange events while living with the Ketkar family whose young children seem to have been the focus of the phenomenon. Her sister also saw some of the happenings, as here described by Miss Kohn:

At 9.45 a.m. on April 23rd, my sister says in a letter, the elder boy 'suddenly materialized in front of me in your doorway like a rubber ball. He looked bright but amazed, and said "I have just come from Karjat". He didn't come through any door'. My sister describes the posture of the boy as having been most remarkable. When she looked up from her letter-writing, she saw him bending forward: both his arms were hanging away from his sides, and the hands hanging limp – his feet were not touching the floor, as she saw a distinct space between his feet and the threshold. It was precisely the posture of a person who has been gripped round the waist and carried, and therefore makes no effort but is gently dropped at his destination.³⁶

In addition to materializing, the boy had been teleported (carried by

unknown means, probably instantaneously, from another location). There are other instances of this occurring, and the two phenomena of teleportation and materialization are probably closely linked. No one can explain how such a thing could happen, and it goes against all our scientific conventions, hence the lack of scientific research into such phenomena.

Perhaps people who claim to have visited other worlds have been teleported there, dematerializing in our world and rematerializing in the other world. Scattered through the vast range of material describing people's brushes with the supernatural are many accounts of visits to what sound like other worlds. Whether these are all the same place, and whether they are also the place where the fairies or Little People dwell, are questions that must remain unanswered for now. Even without being able to solve the mystery neatly, they provide a fascinating glimpse into a possible parallel world. The experiences tend to fall into categories depending on the circumstances, with varying interpretations being placed upon them; though some could not be interpreted at all. The following case is one such.

Early in the morning of Dec. 9, 1873, Thomas B. Cumpston and his wife, 'who occupied good positions in Leeds,' were arrested in a railroad station, in Bristol, England, charged with disorderly conduct, both of them in their nightclothes, Cumpston having fired a pistol. See the *London Times*, Dec. 11, 1873. Cumpston excitedly told that he and his wife had arrived the day before, from Leeds, and had taken a room in a Bristol hotel, and that, early in the morning, the floor had 'opened', and that, as he was about to be dragged into the 'opening,' his wife had saved him, both of them so terrified that they had jumped out the window, running to the railroad station, looking for a policeman. In the *Bristol Daily Post*, December 10, is an account of proceedings in the police court. Cumpston's excitement was still so intense that he could not clearly express himself. Mrs. Cumpston testified that, early in the evening, both of them had been alarmed by loud sounds, but that they had been reassured by the landlady. At three or four in the morning the sounds were heard again. They jumped out on the floor, which was felt giving away under them. Voices repeating their exclamations were heard, or their own voices echoed strangely. Then, according to what she saw, or thought she saw, the floor opened wide. Her husband was falling into this 'opening' when she

dragged him back.

The landlady was called, and she testified that sounds had been heard, but she was unable clearly to describe them. Policemen said that they had gone to the place, the Victoria Hotel, and had examined the room, finding nothing to justify the extraordinary conduct of the Cumpstons. They suggested that the matter was a case of collective hallucination.³⁷

This strange case reminds me of the 1940s experience reported by the Reverend Dr A.T.P. Byles, who at the time was vicar of Yealmpton in Devon. He and his wife found a hole in the path in the churchyard. It was about a yard wide, and when the vicar threw a stone down it, he heard it hit stonework. They hurried off to fetch planks to cover the hole, but when they returned there was no hole to be found: the path was as normal.³⁸ In a third similar case, a female student nurse saw a large hole appear in the floor of her room at around 8 a.m. while she was sitting having a cup of tea. The hole took up most of the floor and the edges looked like rock. She couldn't see the bottom, but knew the hole was deep. A voice told her to jump in, but she ignored it and the hole disappeared.³⁹

Did these mystified people all suffer from hallucinations? It is clear that the floor or ground in *this world* did not open up ... but were all the witnesses perhaps momentarily able to see into some *other world*? If they had fallen into the hole, what would have happened to them? In a science-fiction style, we can speculate that they would have dematerialized out of this world and rematerialized in another; but would they then have been able to return at will? Have people who have disappeared perhaps involuntarily entered another world and cannot now get back? I am thinking now of the story of the Green Children of Woolpit (see here), who wandered into this world and, unable to return home, had to live here until they died. If the next account is reliable, children in this world have also wandered into another world, and returned to tell the tale.

In the early 1920s, a boy and girl living in Flackton, Arkansas, walked through the silent town one Sunday afternoon when everyone was at the baseball game and took a short cut to the ground, through a pine wood.

About 100 yards in the woods we came to a stream neither of us remembered having seen before. It was narrow and clear and the bottom was no deeper than our knees. Reluctant to turn back, we took off our Sunday shoes and stockings and waded across.

Stepping up on the opposite bank, we saw a scene like nothing we had seen before. Gone was the scrubby undergrowth and knobby pine trees, smelly dog fennel and jimson weed, the chattering sparrows and screaming bluejays.

The soil seemed wetter and sandier as we pressed our feet in it. We did not recognize any of the plants or low trees but the long graceful fronds of some kind looked like the wind ferns we found in bogs, although dozens of times larger. We saw a bird, somewhat like a goose but with a longer neck and a thinner coat of feathers, that glided from tree to tree with a sort of coiling effect.

Robbie and I were too lost in the wonder of this new place to be afraid. We strolled along, hand in hand, in the direction of the ball diamond [baseball ground]. At the edge of this strange land we topped a small rise and saw, off in the distance, the ball diamond and our friends.

In the languor that pervaded us it looked like a stage with its own familiar setting of pine and sedge. Our friends' voices came to us, thin and disembodied, like the tinny sounds we heard on the worn wax cylinders of our talking machines. Unnoticed by them, we watched until the game ended and they moved out of sight – off the stage it seemed to us.

Pensively we wandered back through the dream world that unaccountably had caught us up; back through the stream that shouldn't have been there; and when we looked back the dream world had vanished.⁴⁰

Forty years later, in 1962, two men on a hunting trip in New York state likewise entered a different world. It was November, there was about a foot of snow on the ground, and it was still snowing as they walked through the lonely countryside.

Crossing a field I noticed a tall stand of pines and thought it would be the perfect place to find deer. Approaching the pines, we were confronted by a thick wall of underbrush; penetrating it was difficult. Finally, entering the pines through a small opening, we were astounded by what we saw. The pine trees stood in perfectly straight rows in an area 500 yards long and 300 yards wide. Only about two inches of snow covered the ground in this area and at the far end the sun was shining. It was unbelievable.

Mystified, I turned back to look at our place of entry; there it was still snowing and the sky was heavily overcast. Then I started to run toward the sunny area with Uncle Sal behind me, shouting for me to stop, but I kept running until I reached the end of the pines. I groped through another wall of underbrush, this one green and flowering, and entered an area of about three to five acres of green

grass, flowers, birds singing and squirrels chattering. The temperature was near 80 degrees. Impossible, I thought.

Uncle Sal had caught up with me. I said, 'Sal, do you see what I see?'

Dumbfounded, he said, 'Where the heck are we?'

We took off our heavy winter outer clothing and stretched out on a small hill to enjoy a mid-November summer's day. After about 45 minutes I suddenly realized that Dad and Eddie would never believe us so I told Uncle Sal we had better bring them here to show them. On our return trip to the car we were careful not to disturb our tracks leading in.

When we joined Dad and Uncle Eddie for lunch at the car, we told them what we had seen. Then the four of us followed our tracks to the pines and went through – but this time there was no sunshine at the other end. I ran ahead, thinking that we had left this place only an hour ago and now it had all changed. The others followed me through the underbrush and found me standing in awe. Our tracks leading to the small hill and the impressions of our bodies where we had lain showed that the snow was 12 inches deep.

What had happened? Did Sal and I have the same dream? Or did we step into another dimension? For many years thereafter I searched for that stand of pines but never found it again.⁴¹

The last two journeys were involuntary and happened outside a recognizable paranormal context. Other people have also visited unknown places, but within contexts which have been categorized. One modern example is the UFO abduction, where people believe themselves to have been taken aboard an alien spacecraft for a medical examination. It is unlikely that they have really been taken into a spacecraft, however; but it is possible that their captors have taken them temporarily into another world. Just one example from the many that could be cited concerns Brazilian soldier José Antonio, who in May 1969, while fishing in a lagoon, was seized by two 4-foot tall beings and taken to a machine like an upright cylinder. After an apparent journey, he was carried to a large room seemingly made of stone, lit uniformly by a very bright light. A number of hairy dwarfs came in, pale-skinned and with green eyes, long thick beards down to their stomachs, and long, red, waist-length hair. Many strange things happened, but at one point José Antonio felt they were asking him to help them in their relations with Earth.⁴² Although he felt he went on a journey in a spacecraft before reaching the large room, the craft he saw

could have been merely illusory, the aerial journey being fabricated to confuse him as to their real destination. The dwellers in the other world may be keen to avoid humans finding out where they live and how to get there: if we knew their world was close at hand, we might make determined efforts to find the way in, resulting in danger for us and/or for them.

People who have been close to death also sometimes report having visited another world, and naturally enough this world is interpreted as heaven or the afterlife. Some descriptions of the 'transcendental environment' include: 'Just another ... bright sunny world ... real beautiful'; 'Beautiful blue sky ... field of flowers of different colors'; 'A place of beautiful light that pulsated with exquisite music'; 'Beautiful green pasture ... cattle grazing ... bright sunshiny day'.⁴³ Temporary visitors to this world, those going through the 'near death experience' (known as NDE), report having spoken to 'God' and hearing him speak to them, being sent back by 'spirits', meeting 'Jesus', seeing dead relations, and unknown people who greeted them. In 1889 Dr Wiltse of Skiddy, Kansas, was at the point of death and later described in vivid terms his experience of separating from and walking away from his 'dead' body.

I saw a number of persons sitting and standing about the body, and particularly noticed two women apparently kneeling by my left side, and I knew that they were weeping. I have since learned that they were my wife and my sister, but I had no conception of individuality. Wife, sister or friend were as one to me. I did not remember any conditions of relationship; at least I did not think of any. I could distinguish sex, but nothing further.

I now attempted to gain the attention of the people with the object of comforting them as well as assuring them of their own immortality. I bowed to them playfully and saluted with my right hand. I passed about among them also, but found that they gave me no heed. Then the situation struck me as humorous and I laughed outright.

They certainly must have heard that, I thought, but it seemed otherwise, for not one lifted their eyes from my body. It did not once occur to me to speak and I concluded the matter by saying to myself: 'They see only with the eyes of the body. They cannot see spirits. They are watching what they think is I, but they are mistaken. That is not I. This is I and I am as much alive as ever.'

He later travelled through a deserted mountain landscape and reached

three rocks which he felt formed the entrance to the next world. He looked through a low archway:

The atmosphere was green and everything seemed cool and quiet and beautiful. Beyond the rocks, the roadway, the valley, and the mountain range curved gently to the left, thus shutting off the view at a short distance. If I were only around there, I thought, I should soon see angels or devils or both, and as I thought this, I saw the forms of both as I had often pictured them in my mind. I looked at them closely and discovered that they were not realities, but the mere shadowy forms in my thoughts, and that any form might be brought up in the same way. What a wonderful world, I exclaimed, mentally, where thought is so intensified as to take visible form. How happy shall I be in such a realm of thought as that.

He was ‘tempted to cross the boundary line’, but when he decided to do so, he was stopped by a small dense black cloud which appeared in front of his face. I felt the power to move or to think leaving me. My hands fell powerless at my side, my shoulders and head dropped forward, the cloud touched my face and I knew no more.’

During his experience, Dr Wiltse noticed that he was connected to his ‘dead’ body by ‘a small cord, like a spider’s web, running from my shoulders back to my body and attaching to it at the base of the neck in front’.⁴⁴ He was in fact experiencing what is also known as an out-of-body experience, an OOB. Most people who have had an OOB have experienced it spontaneously, but a few people have also been able to initiate the experience at will, including Robert Monroe. He has travelled in our present world in his ‘astral body’, in the world after death, and also in a third type of world, like our present world but yet not the same. He entered it through a hole in a vast wall, and when he ventured through, he found ‘a physical-matter world almost identical to our own’. It had people, vehicles, houses, cities, etc., etc., but there were subtle differences between that world and the ‘normal’ world. There was ‘no internal combustion, gasoline, or oil’ but locomotives using steam power were seen. Wood and coal were not used to make the steam, and Monroe describes in his book *Journeys Out of the Body* how the engines work, and also how their version of the car operates. Monroe learned much about this other world when he lived there for a while, having merged into the body of an architect. Whenever he found himself in a difficult situation because he

didn't have all the necessary knowledge, Monroe would leave the body and come back to this world through the hole in the wall, not wishing to get the architect into trouble. Discussing where this unknown world might be, Monroe suggested:

It might be a memory, racial or otherwise, of a physical earth civilization that predates known history. It might be another earth-type world located in another part of the universe which is somehow accessible through mental manipulation. It might be an antimatter duplicate of this physical earth-world where we are the same but different, bonded together unit for unit by a force beyond our present comprehension.⁴⁵

In exploring reports of an unknown world we have seen it described in a variety of ways. The worlds described sound similar, but the people who have been there have been influenced by their environment and upbringing when trying to interpret their experience. So, to sum up: there is fairyland, the land of the Little People, seemingly so close yet so difficult for humans to enter (except in fairy lore); there is the near death experience in which people visit the world of the spirit, also known as the astral world; there is the world Robert Monroe visited during his out-of-body experiences; there is the fourth-dimensional world which has been used in the past to explain all manner of paranormal phenomena including teleportation; there is the parallel universe which some people believe lies very close to our world; there is the theory of a multiplicity of universes where any course of events which could occur, does, in one or another of the existing worlds; and there is the 'otherworld' of the North Asian shaman or sorcerer/magician, which is an 'inverted image of this world' with everything taking place in reverse (day here is night there, summer here is winter there, etc).⁴⁶ Are these worlds really all one, or is the universe, beyond our tiny part of it, so complex that we cannot begin to understand it? Parapsychologist John L. Randall made a sensible summing up of the situation when discussing the possibility of other worlds:

What we regard as 'reality' – the everyday world with its three spatial dimensions and linear time-flow – is no more than an abstraction from a much more complex universe. We are indeed like the men in Plato's allegory who, seeing the shadows of a higher reality on the walls of their cave, mistake those shadows for reality itself.⁴⁷

Tailpiece

I may not have proved that fairies exist; I may not have proved that there are any other worlds than the one you see around you – but I believe I have shown that there is some mystery to be explored; that there is no simple explanation for people’s experiences of fairies and visits to other worlds. If I were asked to interpret the evidence, I would say that it seems to point to a multiplicity of beings living in a variety of ‘other worlds’ located not far away from ours but to which we do not yet have easy access. However, if you were to ask me again tomorrow for my thoughts on the matter, I might tell you that it is probably all in the minds of the witnesses ... I would like to think that the Little People do exist and that there are other worlds than this, but I have not experienced either personally, and so I just can’t be sure. If *you* have some evidence of your own, to help me make up my mind, please let me know.

Appendix

Some fairy haunts in Britain and Ireland

England

Beedon Barrow, Beedon, Berkshire: The fairies lived on this round barrow, also known as Burrow Hill. A ploughman broke his ploughshare nearby and went home to fetch tools, but when he returned he found the fairies had mended it for him.

Blackdown Hills, Somerset: A man riding over Blagdon Hill in the seventeenth century saw what he thought was a normal fair, but when he rode closer he could see nothing, though he felt a crowd around him. When he got home, he became paralysed and never recovered.

Cadbury hillfort, Congresbury, Avon: The fairies used to live here.

Carn Gluze round barrow, St Just, Cornwall: Miners returning home at night saw fairies dancing around the barrow.

Cauldon Low, Waterhouses, Staffordshire: Fairies were seen dancing on the hill.

Clint's Crag, near Ireshope, Durham: The Queen of the Fairies was believed to live in a palace in a cave at the foot of these rocks on the south bank of Ireshope Burn in Weardale.

Cusop Dingle, Herefordshire: Fairies were seen dancing under the foxgloves.

Dartmoor, Devon: Many locations on the moor were believed to be frequented by pixies, such as a large hut circle on Gidleigh Common, a stone circle on Huccaby Moor, Piskies' Holt in Huccaby Cleave, and the Pixies' Cave which is a grotto below Sheepstor.

Fairy Bridge, Ballasalla, Isle of Man: The islanders used to doff their

hats and greet the Little People at this bridge on the A5 road; one of their fairy hills was in a round barrow nearby.

Fairy Hill, Bishopton, Durham: When this old castle mound was being dug into, a voice was heard, telling the men to leave the hill alone. The work continued, however, and shortly the workmen found a large oak chest. Hoping to find it full of treasure, they broke it open, only to see nothing but nails.

Fairy's Toot, Butcombe, Avon: Strange noises have been heard at this damaged burial chamber, and fairies and goblins were thought to live here.

Glastonbury Tor, Somerset: St Collen visited the King of the Fairies in his palace on the Tor.

Harrow Hill, near Patching, West Sussex: 'The last home of the fairies in England' was the local belief. They lived in the prehistoric flint mines and earthworks on the hill, and when archaeologists came to dig up these sites early this century, the fairies were offended that their existence was denied, and they all left.

Kenchester, Herefordshire: The fairies used to dance in the Roman ruins, and Roman coins found here were called 'dwarfs' money'.

King Stone, Rollright Stones, Long Compton, Warwickshire (the Rollrights themselves are in Oxfordshire): The fairies used to dance at night around this tall standing stone opposite the stone circle; they came out of a hollow in the mound on which the stone stands. Stones placed over the hole were always found moved next day.

Lough Goayr, Kirk Bride, Isle of Man: Said to be one of the last places the fairies were seen on the island. They were cracking their whips and shouting 'Hoi, son N'herin!' ('Hey, for Ireland!') Presumably they were retreating to remoter lands.

Men-an-Tol, near Madron, Cornwall: The stones' guardian fairy was believed to be able to perform cures, and this good fairy could retrieve children who had been stolen by the evil fairies. The changeling had to be passed through the hole in one of the stones.

Nafferton Slack, Humberside: A large stone on the eastern slope of the hill was believed to have strange powers. Sometimes it seemed to be the entrance to a well-lit hall, and one man said he had heard wonderful music coming from it. He had also seen fairies going into the hall, some on foot and some in carriages.

Ogo Hole, Llanymynech, Shropshire: This cave in the hills was believed to be an entrance to fairyland.

Park Mound, Pulborough, West Sussex: There are the ruins of a Norman motte (castle) here, and a fairy funeral was once seen.

Puckaster Cove, near St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight: The fairies were believed to hold their feasts here, on the seashore. A man who followed a strange light saw tiny people in red and purple caps dancing to fairy music. They gave him a brown powder to inhale, and he grew smaller. When they stopped dancing, they sat on puffballs, which burst and showered gold dust on them. They gave the man some gold and made him his normal size again. No one has been able to obtain gold dust from the puffballs at Puckaster Cove since that time.

Pudding Pie Hill, Sowerby, North Yorkshire: By running round this barrow nine times and striking a knife into the top centre, you will hear the fairies inside talking, when you put your ear to the ground, for they built the mound and still live there.

St Cuthbert's Well, Edenhall, Cumbria: The now overgrown well was in the garden of a demolished mansion, and was believed to be a fairy haunt. In Cumbria, a 'luck' was a relic which, if cared for, would ensure the luck of the family and house, and the 'Luck of Edenhall' was a glass vase or goblet, said to have been stolen from the fairies, who prophesied: 'If that glass should break or fall, Farewell the luck of Edenhall.'

Shan Cashtal (Old Castle), Andreas, Isle of Man: The fairies used to travel along an underground passage from this earthwork to Maughold churchyard.

South Barrule mountain, Isle of Man: The god Manannan, Irish god of

the sea who protected the Isle of Man, had his stronghold on South Barrule and worked magic there. The southern slopes were the most fairy-haunted part of the island.

Tower Hill, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Durham: The fairies used to go from the hill to the River Tees to wash themselves and their clothes. It was said that a woman found a fairy girl, dressed in green and with red eyes, sitting on a cheese-like stone. She took her home, sat her by the fire, and gave her bread and butter with sugar to eat, but the child cried so bitterly that she took her back to where she found her.

Trencrom Hill, near Lelant, Cornwall: The spriggans who lived on the hill were warrior fairies and very ugly; they guarded buried treasure and could call up storms. A man digging for the giant's horde of gold believed to be hidden on the hill was frightened off when a storm blew up and swarms of spriggans came out from among the rocks, getting bigger as they drew nearer.

Wick Barrow, Stogursey, Somerset: A prehistoric round barrow also known as the Pixies' Mound: a man found a broken peel (wooden baking shovel) belonging to the pixies on the mound and took it away to repair it. He then returned it, and later found a cake left for him on the mound.

Willy Howe, near Wold Newton, Humberside: A man passing this round barrow at night heard singing, and saw a door leading into the mound. Inside was a well-lit room with people feasting, and a servant offered a cup to the man. He threw away the liquid, not wanting to be in the fairies' power, but ran off with the goblet.

Wales

Aberglaslyn Pass, near Beddgelert, Gwynedd: Last century a man claimed he often saw fairies here: they were like little men, playing in the river.

Beacon Ring, Trelystan, near Welshpool, Powys: This prehistoric hill-fort, crossed by Offa's Dyke Path, was believed to be a fairy dwelling

place.

Caer Drewyn, Corwen, Denbighshire: The name of this hillfort means Gwyn's Homestead, and Gwyn was probably Gwyn ap Nudd, King of the Fairies.

Castell Dinas Bran, Llangollen, Denbighshire: A shepherd saw 'a little man in moss breeches with a fiddle under his arm' who invited him to join the fairy dance. He did so, and was so excited that he cried, 'Play away, old devil; brimstone and water, if you like!' Whereupon the fairies changed their shape and the fiddler turned into the Devil. The shepherd could not stop dancing, and was found next day by his master, 'spinning like mad' until the master broke the charm.

Clocaenog Forest, Denbighshire: The fairies have been seen at several locations in this remote area, now heavily forested, and on nearby Hiraethog (the moors around Llyn Brenig). A man witnessed a fairy dance by Pont Petruall and was taken to fairyland; but next morning awoke on a bed of ferns on the mountainside. The fairies also used to dance on Craig Bron Bannog, a hill in the heart of the forest.

Craig-y-Ddinas, Pontneddfechan, near Glyn-Neath, Swansea: This brooding rock face in its atmospheric wooded setting was said to be the last Welsh home of the fairies. King Arthur and his knights are also said to lie sleeping in a cave here.

Fairy Glen, Betws-y-Coed, North Wales: This atmospheric place, a rocky valley through which the River Conwy flows, just to the south-east of Betws, was a place where the fairies were seen playing.

Frenni Fawr, Prescelly Hills, Pembrokeshire: A shepherd boy saw fairies dancing in a ring on the hillside and went to join them. He found himself in a fairyland palace where anything he wanted was his: but he was told not to drink from the fountain in the garden. Curious to know why not, he took a drink, and instantly the palace disappeared and he was alone on the cold hillside.

Llangua church, Monmouthshire: Last century, two people passing by the church saw dozens of fairies dancing in the meadows behind; they

crossed the bridge in single file and went into the wood.

Llyn Cwellyn, near Rhyd-ddu, Gwynedd: A young man who stepped into a fairy circle by the lake found himself in fairyland. He didn't return to the human world for seven years, by which time his sweetheart had married another man and his parents were dead. The man himself died of a broken heart.

Llyn Morynion, near Ffestiniog, Gwynedd: A race of fairies lived in the lake, and one day they took back into the water a herd of cows which had been looked after by a farmer, until, he displeased the fairies.

Llyn Rhosddu, near Newborough, Anglesey: A fairy who brought a regular loaf of bread to a local woman who had loaned her baking grid, was seen to plunge into the water of the lake.

Llyn y Fan Fach, Black Mountain, Carmarthenshire: A beautiful fairy maiden from the lake married a human man and they lived near Myddfai for many years, having three sons, but the wife in due time returned to the lake, followed by the cattle she had brought from the lake as her dowry. She later returned to teach her sons medicine and the use of herbs, and this is the origin of the famous Physicians of Myddfai, whose remedies have been preserved in manuscript form.

Mynydd Llwydiarth, near Pentraeth, Anglesey: The fairies would sing and dance on the mountain by night, and around the lake. They were 'an invisible race of good little people', who would disappear if approached.

Pentre Ifan cromlech, near Brynberian, Pembrokeshire: Fairies like little children in clothes like soldiers', with red caps, were seen around the stones of this prehistoric burial chamber.

Porth Dinllaen, near Morfa Nefyn, Llyn Peninsula, Gwynedd: The fairies would dance and sing in the prehistoric earthworks on this coastal promontory; afterwards they would lift a certain lump of earth and descend to fairyland.

Scotland

Broch of Houlland, Shetland: Fairies playing the fiddle were heard in this ancient stone tower, and the tune was noted.

Burnswark Hill, Annandale, Dumfries: A fairy palace lay inside the hill, and the fairies were evilly disposed, abducting young men and women to work for them.

Carmylie Hill, Glasgow: A tumulus near the summit of the hill was called Fairy Folk Hillock because the fairies used to dance there at night.

Dun Borbe, South Harris, Outer Hebrides: The fairies lived in this ancient fort, and someone stuck an iron knife into the door, which they could not remove because they dared not touch iron. The man who took it out for them was given a quern for grinding salt by the Queen of the Fairies.

Dun Borge, Snizort, Isle of Skye: This ancient fort was a fairy dwelling until the local villagers shouted 'The fairies' fort is on fire!', whereupon they all fled. They left for good when they found they had been tricked.

Dundreggan, Glenmoriston, Inverness: Fairies lived in this knoll, and they always tried to kidnap mothers of new-born babies to be wet nurses to their own children. A farmer whose wife had just given birth was out tending his cattle, when he heard his wife's sigh in a gust of wind. He flung his knife into the wind, in the name of the Trinity, and she fell to the ground. He had rescued her from the fairies. Another local woman trapped in Dundreggan was rescued by sprinkling holy water on the mound.

Dun Osdale, Duirinish, Isle of Skye: A member of the Macleod clan was enticed into a fairy banquet being held in this fort. When they offered him wine in a gold cup, he did not drink it but stole the cup.

Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye: A tattered Faery Flag is kept at the castle, and there were several stories telling how it came into the family's possession. It was taken into battle by them, because when unfurled, so a fairy maiden said in one account, it would appear like a

great multitude of armed men, causing the enemy to flee.

Eildon Hills, near Melrose, Roxburgh: Thomas the Rhymer, poet and prophet, saw the Queen of the Fairies while out in the hills, and she cast a spell on him, turning him into her slave. She took him into a cave and into fairyland, where he spent seven years before being allowed to depart with the gift of ‘a tongue that could never lie’.

Fairy Hill, Aberfoyle, Perth: The Reverend Robert Kirk is said to have been taken into fairyland when he died on the hill in 1692. He was buried in the churchyard, but it was believed the coffin was full of stones. His grave can be seen, covered by a slab of red sandstone.

Haltadans, Fetlar, Shetland: Standing stones called ‘the limping dance’ where trows (the name for Shetland fairies) danced in the moonlight. Once they danced till sunrise, and for punishment were turned to stone.

Tomnahurich (Hill of the Yews), Inverness: There was believed to be a fairy living inside the hill; also it was said that Thomas the Rhymer sleeps there with his followers.

Ireland

Ben Bulbin, County Sligo: Evans Wentz collected stories of sightings of the Little People in the shadows of Ben Bulbin, like the men who heard music and voices like children’s, at night, and the old farmer who saw several thousand ‘gentry’ in armour shining in the moonlight.

Dun Aengus, Inishmore, Aran Islands, County Galway: This magnificent prehistoric clifftop fort was one of the fairies’ favourite abodes.

Hill of the Brocket Stones, Carns, near Grange, County Sligo: The gentry would come down from this hill like an army; they were like living people, but in different dress – ‘they were not living beings such as we are’.

Knockmaa, between Headford and Tuam, County Galway: This hill

was the site of the palace of Finvara (Finbhearra), King of the Connacht Fairies. In the fairies' palace are also people they have abducted. There is an entrance to an underground world inside the hill. The fairy king is buried here in a stone cairn with his wife Onagh.

Lough Gur, County Limerick: Fairies were believed to live in the waters of the lake and in the surrounding countryside. Also in the lake is an entrance to Tir-na-nog, the Land of the Young, to which the Tuatha de Danann retreated.

Lough Neagh, County Antrim: The town traditionally lying beneath the water was inhabited by a fairy race, and people with the gift of fairy vision can still see the ruins of the beautiful palaces. Boatmen have heard the sounds of music and laughter rising up from the fairy festivals being held below.

Newgrange chambered tomb, County Meath: The famous prehistoric burial chamber was a fairy haunt, and people living nearby used to see the 'good people' come out at night and in the morning. Dagda, High King of the Tuatha de Danann, lived in the mound.

Rathcroghan, County Roscommon: Owneygat, or the Cat's Cave, is an entrance to the Otherworld.

Slieve Gullion, County Armagh: 'The good people in this mountain are the people who have died and been taken; the mountain is enchanted' (according to a local man who spoke to Evans Wentz).

Slievenamon, County Tipperary: A famous fairy palace was located on the eastern shoulder of the mountain, where the women of the fairy mound enchanted Fionn mac Cumhail.

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