Ailsa Craig and the Two Giants

Many years ago, there were two giants. In Ireland Finn McColl and in Scotland Douglas "Dougie "Burns.

Both men were huge in both stature and in stories about their demonstrations of strength and courage. For many, many years there was a peaceful rivalry between them, but all that changed, when they both fell in love with the same woman.

Who can blame them, for Ailsa was indeed beautiful, bright and brave. Both giants courted her, and both failed. They took it upon themselves to blame the other for their lack of success, and so the great argument started.

Finn would hurl insults across the sea from Ireland, carried on the prevailing wind. Douglas would have to wait for calm weather before responding, which gave him time to think, and sharpen the barbed repost. This went on for quite some time, then Finn had an idea, he would build a great causeway, so when he bellowed across the channel, he would be closer to his rival. Douglas responded by building an enormous catapult, and flung pebbles back across the sea. One of which killed Finn's favourite chicken, which enraged him so much that he hurled a boulder towards his rival.

The rock landed short of the Scottish shore, but can still be seen off the Ayrshire coast. Douglas named it Ailsa Craig, Ailsa's rock, in honour of their shared love.

A new plan was needed, as Douglas heard that Finn's strength came from drinking the venom of vipers. So a raiding party crossed the sea from Scotland, and gathered up all the snakes.

Despite this daring action , neither giant won the hand of the lady, instead she fell for Barry, a Welsh bard. His poems of the land and of the sea, charmed her. His passion for words, and his skill on the harp, won the day.

Peace eventually returned between Ireland and Scotland, and the two great giants became firm friends in their later years.

As for Ailsa and Barry, they married and had many children. A descendant of one of those children, some years ago now, told me the story of Ailsa and The Two Giants.

More stuff from Jules Procter can be found at :- http://www.banburyshire.net