

Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway

An Irish Tale



The Giant's Causeway is an unusual rock formation. It is found in Northern Ireland. The Causeway is made up of hexagon-shaped rocks. Scientists believe that the volcanic activity under the water formed these unusual rocks. But an old Irish tale offers a different explanation.

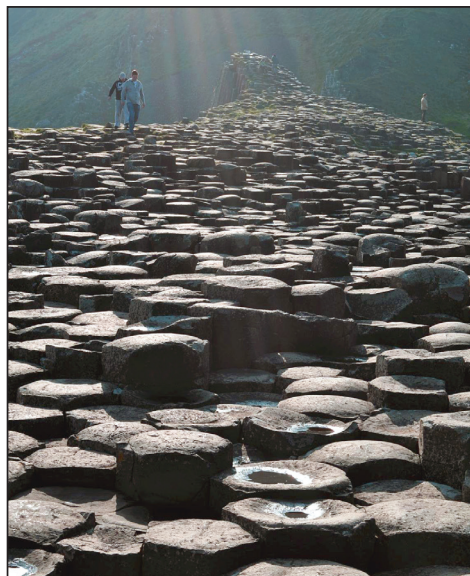
Long ago, lived a giant named Fionn MacCumhaill. This was his Irish name. As time passed, this same giant came to be called Finn MacCool, so that's what we'll call him.

Finn lived along the northern tip of Ireland. Finn could see the tip of Scotland across the North Channel. In Scotland, lived another giant. This giant's name was Benandonner, but he was often known as the Red Giant. He had fiery red hair and a long wild beard of the same color.

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One day, the Red Giant began to yell insults at Finn. He called Finn all sorts of mean names. Finn could ignore the names. But then the Red Giant began to say that Finn was a wimp, that he was a weak fighter. This made Finn angry.

Finn challenged the Red Giant to a proper fight. The other giant accepted. Finn didn't want to get his feet wet crossing the North Channel. So he built a causeway out of stones and walked across. A causeway is a stone path. Today, the path Finn built is known as the Giant's Causeway.



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**Hexagon-shaped stones on the
Giant's Causeway**

Finn finished the causeway. He crossed it to Scotland. When he saw the Red Giant, Finn ran back the way he came. From afar, Finn could tell that the Red Giant was far larger than he was. The Red Giant chased Finn home. Luckily, Finn arrived a few moments before the larger giant.

Finn slammed the door behind him. He breathlessly described all that had happened to his wife, Oonagh. Luckily, Oonagh was a smart woman and knew just what to do. She pushed him into a huge cradle. Then she covered all but Finn's face with a sheet.

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Soon after, the Red Giant began to bang on the door. Calmly, Oonagh opened the door and invited him inside.

"Where is that coward, Finn MacCool," the Red Giant demanded.

"Why, he's out tending to the cows right now. Why don't you sit down and have some tea," said Oonagh soothingly.

The Red Giant was still very angry and didn't want any tea.

"Bring me Finn MacCool right now," he demanded.

"Calm down," said Oonagh. "I can't bring him too you because he's out in the pasture with the cows. But you can see our baby while you wait." Oonagh brought the Red Giant over to the crib.

When the Red Giant looked at the giant creature inside the crib, he became very scared. If Finn's baby is this big, Finn himself must be gigantic, the giant thought.

The Red Giant began to tremble in fear. He fled from Finn MacCool's house and ran back to Scotland over the causeway. He destroyed much of the causeway on his way back, for he was scared that Finn would try to follow him. The Red Giant was never seen in Ireland again. But what's left of the causeway remains until this day.



The Giant's Causeway