

Out With The Piskies...

Written by Andy Owen

I saw my first Piskie last Sunday...

I'd heard a lot about them of course, as they are a key part of Cornish folklore.

But, I was still pleasantly surprised.

In our garden, we have an area we call the 'magic trail'. It's behind a hedge and out of view from the house or the rest of our substantial garden.

Why I called it a magic trail, I'm not sure. But, it suits it quite well. It's on two levels, with a connecting gate and two concrete steps down.

In the summer months, I gave the trail a major spruce-up, as it had become overgrown. I cut down some bushes and tree overhangs and spent a bit of time on it.

I was quite happy with the result.



All the time I was working in the trail, I got the weird feeling I was being watched.

But, I have to say, it wasn't a worrying feeling at all.

Quite the contrary, in fact.

Almost as if something or someone was endorsing my work and was happy with what I was doing.

Barney felt it too. I could tell.

As the trail became clearer, he mooched around, smelling everything, but looking up and down, including in the trees.

When I finally got to the gate, it was overgrown and pretty worse for wear. A bolt that was on it, was rusted and clearly, the gate hadn't been open for years.



I eventually removed it and made a new gate.

Barney and I went down to the lower level and there was definitely a presence there. You could feel it.

Later that day, I had this urge to create something else. Why, I don't know, as this kind of thing I don't normally do.

I think I was instructed in some way...

I had an old wooden pallet in the woodshed. So, from that, I crudely constructed a rustic piskie seat.

Yes, a seat for them. How weird was that?



Yes, I know.

Not exactly something a master carpenter would be proud of - and certainly something Barry Bucknell would have laughed out loud at.

(Only those of a certain age, will know about the legend that was Barry...)

But, whatever, I was quite pleased with it.

And so, it seems, were my new Piskie chums down in the magic trail.

Because, the one I saw, was sitting on my seat. How cool is that?

What was he like? Well, I think it was a he, anyway.

He was quite small. His little legs only dangled a short way over the seat and he wore little pointed shoes.

He had a cheery, wrinkled face with reddish hair and wore a kind of green tunic.

He seemed to be cheerful and happy - and smiled when he saw me, before jumping playfully over the back of the chair and into the bushes.

Reading up on them, Piskies are apparently known for their prankish nature.

They can be mischievous and this might explain why some new garden lights I placed along the edge of the trail, have stopped working - and despite them seemingly being fine, they refuse to work and I've removed them.

Interestingly, Piskies are known to like living close to places of ancient worship, such as stone circles. Well, when we purchased this house, there were stone circles on the top lawn in the garden - and a Celtic cross.

We separated the stones last year and moved them to other locations, but the Celtic Cross remains at the top end of the garden.

Interesting, isn't it?

Some believe that Piskies are spirits of people who aren't bad enough for hell - but aren't good enough for heaven.

Others claim that they are ancient gods who have been scattered with holy water and shrank down in size.

Another theory suggested they were the souls of babies who had not been Christened, a story championed by early clergymen and one which has often been used to explain their fairy origins.

There are many, many tales about Cornish Piskies.

One of the best, is the tale of a little boy from St Allen, near Truro

This boy was exploring and wandered into a dell close to his home to pick some wild flowers.

After a while, his Mother went to look for him. Try as she might, she could not find him anywhere.

Local villagers were alerted and searched the whole area for three days.

Suddenly, the boy was found fast asleep in the very spot where his mother had last seen him.

When asked where he had been, the child did not know that any time had passed.

He said he had heard a bird singing while he was picking flowers - and he had followed the sound of the lovely song into the woods.

Suddenly he was aware that it was night. He saw many beautiful stars.

But, they weren't stars. They were Piskies.

They led him into a cave sparkling with jewels and gave him honey to eat before singing him to sleep.

When he awoke, he was back in the dell.

I think I'm going to like our Piskies...