

## **Witches, Castles and Other Fairytales in Guernsey**

Guernsey's shores are home to a rich and unique heritage stretching back thousands of years. Tales of witches and fairies blend almost imperceptibly with accounts of fierce battles, castles and forts in the making of this remarkable Channel Island.

### ***Fairy Haunts***

The Creux des Faies is an ancient megalithic tomb dating back at least 4,000 years. Legends tell of this prehistoric passage tomb as the entrance to fairyland. Folklore relates how at night fairies came out to play here.

Certain stories tell how in days gone by, if a bowl of milk porridge was taken in the evening to the Creux des Faies and left there with a piece of knitting, the next morning the work would be completed.

Another significant fairy site is La Table des Pions, known locally as the Fairy Ring. La Table Des Pions was built as a table for the 'Pions' or officials who accompanied dignitaries on the 'Chevauchee' around the island, when members of the Royal Court would check that the Chemin du Roi (King's Way) was clear of obstruction.

### ***Guernsey's Castles***

Unlike Castle Cornet, one of Guernsey's oldest castles, which has been for the most part magnificently preserved, the more northerly 18<sup>th</sup> century Vale Castle now sits in ruins. The castle, located off the coast of St Peter Port was fortified against the French from 1206 and 1256. The original castle is said to have a chapel, a half round tower and square tower, all of which were defended by walls, a ditch and drawbridge.

Vale Castle is said to have originally been built by the father of William the Conqueror and the site occupied as early as 500-600BC.

### ***Witches and Wizardry***

Guernsey heritage is awash with stories concerning witchcraft and wizardry. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Le Catiaroc was noted as being the middle haunt of the witches and wizards during the Witch Trials under Bailiff Amias de Carteret (1600-1630).

Every Friday night at Le Catiaroc the Devil, in the form of a black goat called Baal Berith or Barberie, sat on the centre capstone of the dolmen while witches, warlocks and fairies danced around in worship.

Le Trepied is a prehistoric passage grave, built during the Neolithic period. It also figures in accounts of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Witch Trials as a Friday night rendezvous for witch's covens when the Devil sat enthroned on the capstone while his disciples danced around, shrieking his praises.

In 1448, the Pope announced that witchcraft was heresy and a war was declared against the witches and wizards. In an 80 year period from 1560 to 1640 on Guernsey, 44 people were burnt at the stake and 35 were banished from the island for life.

### ***Forts and The Navy Blue Guernsey Jumper***

In the early 1800s, many wealthy French residents fleeing the Revolution set up home in the islands. Sixteen forts and 58 coastal batteries were built around the time of the French Revolution to defend the island from Napoleon and the French. There include Clarence Battery (1780), Fort Grey (1804) and Rouse Tower (1778-79). Fort Pezeries, originally built in the late 1600s, was also extended and strengthened.

General Sir John Doyle was made Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey in 1803 and embarked on an ambitious programme of reclamation and rebuilding as part of his defensive strategy against the French.

During the time of the Napoleonic War, Admiral Lord Nelson recommended that the Guernsey jumper be worn by the Royal Navy and it was at this time that the Guernsey, which until then had been knitted in the unscoured natural wool, was dyed Navy Blue.

For more information on Guernsey please visit [www.visitguernsey.com](http://www.visitguernsey.com) or call 01481 723 552. Fly to Guernsey from £180pp for two nights, including flights, hotel and free car hire. [www.islandgetaways.co.uk](http://www.islandgetaways.co.uk) or call 01983 721 111.

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#### NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Guernsey is connected directly with nine UK airports and three UK ports:

- London Gatwick: Aurigny [www.aurigny.com](http://www.aurigny.com), Flybe [www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)
- London Stansted: Aurigny
- Manchester: Aurigny, Flybe
- Birmingham: Flybe
- East Midlands: Aurigny

- Bristol: Aurigny
- Exeter: Flybe
- Norwich: Flybe
- Southampton: Flybe, Blue Islands [www.blueislands.com](http://www.blueislands.com)
- Plymouth: Air Southwest [www.airsouthwest.com](http://www.airsouthwest.com)
- Poole: Condor Ferries [www.condorferries.co.uk](http://www.condorferries.co.uk)
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