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The Buck Goat of Garve *Alec Williamson*

Many years ago there was this man and he was a bit of a stalwart in his own community and he lived in a place called Camus nan Gall. That is before you come into Little Loch Broom, it is between Little Loch Broom and Dundonnell and it was quite a little community at one time, you know. But I'm talking about ancient days. And this man, he was a very hefty man. He was a very strong man and quite a determination about him. And his name was Hughie Kilpatrick or as they said in Gaelic, Ùisdean Mòr Mac'IllePhàdraig.

Anyway, this day he was going to Dingwall. He came right down the Dirrie, right down the fen, right down the Dirrie til he came to Garve. Now there's quite a big river in Garve and people that used that river crossed at - there was no bridge you see - there was a sort of a, some stepping stones and that. They always needed a guide because sometimes the river would be in spate and they couldnae see the top of the stones.

But when Ùisdean came there, there was a post there beside the river and there was two or three whistles there so he took one - no, what happened was, he crossed the river - that's right now - the whistles were there, but, to let the guide know that he was there. Anyway, he crossed the river and as he was making up for the village of Garve, he saw this man coming towards him and this was the guide, this was the weaver. And he said to him, he said

'You should have shouted to me. You should have whistled. There's whistles over there. I'm the guide here.'

'Oh yes' he said.

'I charge six pence a crossing.'

'Yes,' he said 'I heard that but I didn't bother you today. I knew that I could get across.'

'You knew?' he said.

'Yes. The crossing was quite easy.'

'And now' he said 'how do you think you'll get back?'

'The same way' he said. 'I'll just cross the river. I'm going to Dingwall' he said 'and when I come back' he said 'I'll just cross the same way.'

'Don't you know' he said 'there's something to be seen there.'

'Yes' he said 'I heard that. I heard that there was an apparition or something to be seen on that river.'

'Yes' he said 'he can go in any shape' he said 'and usually he goes in the shape of a buck goat but much, much bigger than that' he said. 'And if you happen to meet him' he said 'you'll be done for.'

'Oh I see' he said 'well, then' he said 'it's supernatural isn't it?'

'Yes' he said 'I'm afraid it is.'

'Ach well' he said 'I'm not frightened of that. I don't believe much in it anyway.' he said 'I have a good going musket' he said.

'Oh you have?' he said 'Oh well' he said 'do you think that will be a deterrent?'

'I think so' he said.

'You'll fire it.' he said 'What if it missed?'

'Well' he said 'if it missed, I have a good sword. A good going sword.' he said 'I can use that.'

'What' he said 'if the big sword won't come out of the scabbard?'

'Ah well' he said 'I dinnae see that happening before. But you never know, maybe not.'

And then he said 'What would you do?'

'Well' he said 'I would give a whistle to my grandaunt.'

'Your what?'

'My grandaunt. I'd whistle her and she'd come.'

'Oh, I see' he said. 'I don't know' he said 'I don't know who your grandaunt is and I don't know...'

'No' he said 'you don't, do you. Well' he said 'you'll see me when I come back' he said 'from Dingwall.'

'Right' he said 'but mind' he said 'but come to my house and I'll guide you over.'

'Right' he said 'I'll do that, I'm sure.'

So he went to Dingwall and he done his business there and he might have stayed the night in Dingwall.

Anyway, next day he was back and the weaver was out.

'Oh' he said 'you got back.'

'Yes' he said 'I got back.'

'Well' he said 'Are you going to cross? Will I go with you?' he said.

'No' he said 'you don't need to. I don't need you at all.' he said 'I'll manage to cross same as I did the last time.'

'And what if this thing will meet you?'

And he said 'What good would you do? I'm sure it would frighten you also.'

'No' he said 'when I'm there' he said 'it doesn't appear.'

'Ah, I see' he said 'it doesn't appear. Ah well' he said 'you have great powers then if it doesn't appear when you're there.'

'No' he said 'it doesn't.'

'Anyway' he said 'I'm off.'

'Ok then' he said 'on your own head be it.'

So he came to the river and he crossed.

Well out of the middle of the river... Before he crossed, he looked. He knew that there was going to be something and there was. He saw this coming and it was coming on its hind legs, the forelegs wasn't down and it was terrible. It was shaped like a buck goat, certainly, but three or four times the size of it. It was a monster and he made straight for him. So it spoke to him and it was in Gaelic of course and it spoke...

Translating that, he said,

'Big Hugh Kilpatrick' he said 'your life wont go out of here.'

So he answered him back. 'You beast of the cairns' he said 'how do you know? Nobody knows.'

So anyway, he came further and further and further to the other side and then he took the musket and of course the musket refused.

And he took the sword out, well he tried to take it out but it was stuck in the scabbard.

Then he whistled very hard, two fingers in the mouth, he whistled very hard and he put his hand to his side and he took a dirk out and straight into the monster's side and it lay and it started bleeding in the water, must have got him in the right part and he started bleeding.

Did he stay on the other side that night? I'm not sure but I think he went back, he went back to see. He met some of the neighbours. No, he stayed the night because the next day he went back so he must have stayed in Strathcarron or something. Anyway, when he come back, he crossed the river again. There people were speaking to him,

'Did you hear?'

He said 'What?'

'What happened to weaver?'

He said 'What happened to weaver?'

'He's sick' he said 'very, very sick. The weaver's on his death bed.'

'Ah' he said 'I'm sorry to hear that now. I'd better go up and see him. He was the guide' he said 'I'd better go up and see him.'

So he went up and he spoke to the weaver.

'Well' he said 'how are you today then?'

'Ah' he said 'I'm not good at all.'

'Are you not?' he said 'How's that now?'

'It's my side.' he said 'it's my side.'

'What's wrong with your side?' he said

'I don't know.' he said 'I've got a terrible, terrible pain in it.'

And of course he wasn't looking but 'Wait a minute' he said and he pulled down the cloak 'I think my grandaunt came to see you, didn't she?' He said 'You, you're an ogre' he said 'You probably will die' he said 'but you've been an ogre all the days of your life.' he said. 'There was nothing on that river' he said 'nothing. You told lies to

people' he said 'you were robbing them. Six pences and whatever about there being a goat, just to cross the river, 'cause you'd say they'd get a fright on the river. And you were the fright all the time, weren't you? Now' he said 'I'm leaving and I'll tell all the people what kind of person you were.'

And he did and told all the people that he was robbing them all the time by being their guide and it was just a bogus guide and that is the story of the buck goat and big Hughie Kilpatrick.

This is the transcript of the audio file available at
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