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## **The Dragon and The Boar** *by Patsy Dyer*

This story was sent to me by Patrick Thompson Seannachie of Clan MacTavish.

If you walk along the Crinan Canal today it seems a very peaceful, quiet pastime. But hundreds of years ago it would have been filled with warriors and invasions and there were forts all over the land. If you go to Dunardry locks today, just slightly north of there, you would have seen a huge hillfort called Dunardry which means Hillfort of the High King.

Dunardry was ruled for many, many generations by the MacTavish clan. The walls were high and the walls were thick, thick to keep out invaders but also to keep out the magical animals that once walked all over this land and it's one of these magical creatures of which I am going to tell you now.

One morning, the oldest son of Clan MacTavish went out into Moin a mhor hunting. In those days, the great moss had many trees behind which a hunter could stake out and watch his prey and young MacTavish had just killed himself a stag and as he was putting it over his shoulders, a mist came down, a thick white mist. And he decided he would return back to Dunardry.

After walking for a while, he suddenly realised that he was lost in the fog. He stumbled on a round mound of stone, cautiously he walked around it and noticed that there was a doorway slightly open and a strange light was coming from inside. He put the stag down and very carefully, quietly stepped inside. And he saw a great stone mound. He walked towards the light, the pale light and to his horror, he saw it was a dragon, a dragon lying curled up on a mound of bones and gold. Very carefully and very quietly he retraced his steps and at the last minute, raced out of the cavern but a stone became dislodged and it fell down inside causing echos. The dragon awoke and saw the young MacTavish leave the cavern and it roared. MacTavish quickly picked up the deer that he'd killed and he shoved it into the doorway and ran as fast as he could. He was the fastest runner in the whole MacTavish clan. But it didn't take long for the dragon to push the dead deer out of the way and raced after him.

Dragons, as we all know, are nocturnal creatures and they do not see very well in daylight but when it's foggy they are almost totally blind but they have a very great sense of smell. Young MacTavish knew this and with superhuman power he brought down another deer and he tied to its antlers his cloak and set it off in the dragon's direction and he continued racing towards the forest behind Dunardry, for the mist was starting to rise.

When the dragon discovered that he'd been cheated, he set out such flames from his nostrils that all the trees on the Moin a mhor were burned down to the ground and today very few trees will ever grow there. The dragon then began his pursuit.

The young MacTavish plunged on into the forest and it was dark and it was quiet. He didn't want to go anywhere

close to the fort, he didn't want the dragon to attack the fort, so he took out the horn and blew his horn to tell the people of Dunardry that they were under attack and then he plunged further on into the dark forest. Until he found himself in a glen filled with dark stones and vast pools of water. He heard a roar behind him and knew the dragon could see him in the darkness, he turned round, put the arrow to his bow and let it fly and the arrow bounced off the dragon's coat of mail.

MacTavish was about to run towards a large rock where he thought he could position himself, a better place to let the arrows fly, when suddenly out of the undergrowth came the largest wild boar he'd ever seen. Blue plumes of breath came from its nostrils, its eyes glinted gold, bristles stood on its back like spears, its tusks so sharp and shiny they reflected the fire that came from the dragon's mouth. He stood in fear before the boar but suddenly the boar looked at the boy and then turned and raced towards the dragon. The dragon, annoyed by the interruption, continued its chase of young MacTavish who then jumped behind a huge rock and prepared his arrows. The dragon then saw the boar race towards it, and turned and together they ran straight towards each other. The speed that the two great beasts put on and the weight behind their vast bodies and the hate that flowed through their blood caused the most catastrophic collision. The beasts hit head-on and threw their bodies against the rock behind which the young MacTavish stood and he was knocked on to the floor and he heard the rock crack right through the middle and sheer. And then the forest was in silence.

When the king from the fort, and the warriors arrived, young MacTavish stood in front of the two dead beasts and he quickly told his father what had happened and the

clan chief stood on top of the rocks that had been cut in half by the beasts' bodies and called out

'This day my son has been saved by the brave beast, the boar. From this day forward, the boar will be the mark by which we are known and the beast, the boar, will be known and put in a place of honour for the clan'

and then he said

'From this day forward, the clan MacTavish clan will follow the deeds of this noble beast, unselfish in its bravery and courage and you shall be confident in all you do and fear none of the deeds of others for this a great gift the boar has given'

The men then went towards the boar, they cut the head from the beast's body and they took it back to Dunardry as a mark of the great clan and to this day it is still the mark that is used by Clan MacTavish and today if you walk just 200 yards south from Dunardry locks you may still see the rocks that were cloven in two and the glen in which the stones stand is known today as Glenn-na-Biestie, the Glen of the Beast.

This is the transcript of the audio file available at  
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