

= Kelpie =

Kelpie , or water kelpie , is the Scots name given to a shape @-@ shifting water spirit inhabiting the lochs and pools of Scotland . It has usually been described as appearing as a horse , but is able to adopt human form . Some accounts state that the kelpie retains its hooves when appearing as a human , leading to its association with the Christian idea of Satan as alluded to by Robert Burns in his 1786 poem " Address to the Deil " .

Almost every sizeable body of water in Scotland has an associated kelpie story , but the most extensively reported is that of Loch Ness . Parallels to the general Germanic neck and the Scandinavian bäckahäst have been observed . More widely , the wihwin of Central America and the Australian bunyip have been seen as counterparts . The origin of the belief in malevolent water horses has been proposed as originating in human sacrifices once made to appease gods associated with water , but narratives about the kelpie also served a practical purpose in keeping children away from dangerous stretches of water , and warning young women to be wary of handsome strangers .

Kelpies have been portrayed in their various forms in art and literature , most recently in two 30 @-@ metre (98 ft) high steel sculptures in Falkirk , The Kelpies , completed in October 2013 .

= = Etymology = =

The etymology of the Scots word kelpie is uncertain , but it may be derived from the Gaelic calpa or cailpeach , meaning " heifer " or " colt " . The first recorded use of the term to describe a mythological creature , then spelled kaelpie , appears in the manuscript of an ode by William Collins , composed some time before 1759 and reproduced in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh of 1788 . The place names Kelpie hoall and Kelpie hooll are reported in A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue as appearing in the 1674 burgh records for Kirkcudbright .

= = Folk beliefs = =

= = = Description and common attributes = = =

Douglas Harper , historian and founder of the Online Etymology Dictionary , defines kelpie as " the Lowland name of a demon in the shape of a horse " . It is the most common water spirit in Scottish folklore , but the name is attributed to several different forms in narratives recorded throughout the country . The late 19th century saw the onset of an interest in transcribing folklore , but the recorders were inconsistent in spelling and frequently anglicised words , which could result in differing names for the same spirits .

Commentators have disagreed over the kelpie 's aquatic habitat . Folklorists who define kelpies as spirits living beside rivers , as distinguished from the Celtic lakeside @-@ dwelling water horse (each @-@ uisge) , include 19th @-@ century minister of Tiree John Gregorson Campbell and 20th @-@ century writers Lewis Spence and Katharine Briggs . This distinction is not universally applied however ; Sir Walter Scott for instance claims that the kelpie 's range may extend to lochs . Mackillop 's dictionary reconciles the discrepancy , stating that the kelpie was " initially thought to inhabit ... streams , and later any body of water . " But the distinction should stand argues one annotator , who suggests that people are led astray when an each uisge in a " common practice of translating " are referred to as kelpies in English accounts , and thus mistakenly attribute lake @-@ dwelling habits to the latter .

Others ascribe the term kelpie to a wide variety of mythical creatures . Counterparts in some regions of Scotland include the shoopiltee and nuggle of Shetland and the tangie of Orkney ; in other parts of the United Kingdom they include the Welsh ceffyl d?r and the Manx cabbyl @-@ ushtey . Parallels to the general Germanic neck and the Scandinavian bäckahäst have been observed ; Nick Middleton observes that " the kelpie of Scottish folklore is a direct parallel of the [sic

] bäckahästen [of Scandinavian folklore] " . The wihwin of Central America and the Australian bunyip are seen as similar creatures in other parts of the world .

The mythological kelpie is usually described as a powerful and beautiful black horse inhabiting the deep pools of rivers and streams of Scotland , preying on any humans it encounters , One of the water @-@ kelpie 's common identifying characteristics is that its hooves are reversed as compared to those of a normal horse , a trait also shared by the nykur of Iceland . An Aberdeenshire variation portrays the kelpie as a horse with a mane of serpents , whereas the resident equine spirit of the River Spey was white and could entice victims onto its back by singing .

The creature 's nature was described by Walter Gregor , a folklorist and one of the first members of the Folklore Society , as " useful " , " hurtful " , or seeking " human companionship " ; in some cases , kelpies take their victims into the water , devour them , and throw the entrails to the water 's edge . In its equine form the kelpie is able to extend the length of its back to carry many riders together into the depths , a common theme in the tales is of several children clambering onto the creature 's back while one remains on the shore . Usually a little boy , he then pets the horse but his hand sticks to its neck . In some variations the lad cuts off his fingers or hand to free himself ; he survives but the other children are carried off and drowned , with only some of their entrails being found later . Such a creature said to inhabit Glen Keltney in Perthshire is considered to be a kelpie by 20th @-@ century folklorist Katharine Mary Briggs , but a similar tale also set in Perthshire has an each uisge as the culprit and omits the embellishment of the young boy . The lad does cut his finger off when the event takes place in Thurso , where a water kelpie is identified as the culprit . The same tale set at Sunart in the Highlands gives a specific figure of nine children lost , of whom only the innards of one are recovered . The surviving boy is again saved by cutting off his finger , and the additional information is given that he had a Bible in his pocket . Gregorson Campbell considers the creature responsible to have been a water horse rather than a kelpie , and the tale " obviously a pious fraud to keep children from wandering on Sundays " .

Kelpie myths usually describe a solitary creature , but a fairy story recorded by John F. Campbell in Popular Tales of the West Highlands (1860) has a different perspective . Entitled Of the Drocht na Vougha or Fuoah , which is given the translation of the bridge of the fairies or kelpies , it features a group of voughas . The spirits had set about constructing a bridge over the Dornoch Firth after becoming tired of travelling across the water in cockles shells . It was a magnificent piece of work resplendent with gold piers and posts , but sank into the water to become a treacherous area of quicksand after a grateful onlooker tried to bless the kelpies for their work . The same story is recorded by Folklore Society member and folklore collector Charlotte Dempster simply as The Kelpie 's Bridge (1888) with no mention of Voughas or Fuoah . Quoting the same narrative Jennifer Westwood , author and folklorist , uses the descriptor water kelpies , adding that in her opinion " Kelpies , here and in a few other instances , is used in a loose sense to mean something like ' imps ' " .

Progeny resulting from a mating between a kelpie and a normal horse were impossible to drown , and could be recognised by their shorter than normal ears , a characteristic shared by the mythical water bull or tarbh uisge in Scottish Gaelic , similar to the Manx tarroo ushtey .

= = = Shapeshifting = = =

Kelpies have the ability to transform themselves into non @-@ equine forms , and can take on the outward appearance of human figures , in which guise they may betray themselves by the presence of water weeds in their hair . In their human form , kelpies are almost invariably male . One of the few stories describing the creature in female form is set at Conon House in Ross and Cromarty . It tells of a " tall woman dressed in green " , with a " withered , meagre countenance , ever distorted by a malignant scowl " , who overpowered and drowned a man and a boy after she jumped out of a stream . Gregor described a kelpie adopting the guise of a wizened old man continually muttering to himself while sitting on a bridge stitching a pair of trousers . Believing it to be a kelpie , a passing local struck it on the head , causing it to revert to its equine form and scamper back to its lair in a nearby pond . Other accounts describe the kelpie when appearing in human form as a " rough ,

shaggy man who leaps behind a solitary rider , gripping and crushing him " , or as tearing apart and devouring humans .

A folk tale from Barra tells of a lonely kelpie that transforms itself into a handsome young man to woo a pretty young girl it was determined to take for its wife . But the girl recognises the young man as a kelpie and removes his silver necklace (his bridle) while he sleeps . The kelpie immediately reverts to its equine form , and the girl takes it home to her father 's farm , where it is put to work for a year . At the end of that time the girl rides the kelpie to consult a wise man , who tells her to return the silver necklace . Once again transformed into the handsome young man she had first met the wise man asks the kelpie whether if given the choice it would choose to be a kelpie or a mortal . The kelpie in turn asks the girl whether , if he were a man , she would agree to be his wife . She confirms that she would , after which the kelpie chooses to become a mortal man , and the pair are married .

The arrival of Christianity in Scotland in the 6th century resulted in some folk stories and beliefs being recorded by scribes , usually Christian monks , instead of being perpetuated by word of mouth . Some accounts state that the kelpie retains its hooves even in human form , leading to its association with the Christian notion of Satan , just as with the Greek god Pan . Robert Burns refers to such a Satanic association in his " Address to the Deil " (1786) :

= = = Capture and killing = = =

When a kelpie appeared in its equine persona without any tack , it could be captured using a halter stamped with the sign of a cross , and its strength could then be harnessed in tasks such as the transportation of heavy mill stones . One folk tale describes how the Laird of Morphie captured a kelpie and used it to carry stones to build his castle . Once the work was complete , the laird released the kelpie , which was evidently unhappy about its treatment . The curse it issued before leaving ? " Sair back and sair banes / Drivin ' the Laird o ' Morphies 's stanes , / The Laird o ' Morphie 'll never thrive / As lang 's the kelpy is alive " ? was popularly believed to have resulted in the extinction of the laird 's family . Some kelpies were said to be equipped with a bridle and sometimes a saddle , and appeared invitingly ready to ride , but if mounted they would run off and drown their riders . If the kelpie was already wearing a bridle , exorcism might be achieved by removing it . A bridle taken from a kelpie was endowed with magical properties , and if brandished towards someone , was able to transform that person into a horse or pony .

Just as with cinematic werewolves , a kelpie can be killed by being shot with a silver bullet , after which it is seen to consist of nothing more than " turf and a soft mass like jelly @-@ fish " according to an account published by Spence . When a blacksmith 's family were being frightened by the repeated appearances of a water kelpie at their summer cottage , the blacksmith managed to render it into a " heap of starch , or something like it " by penetrating the spirit 's flanks with two sharp iron spears that had been heated in a fire .

= = Loch Ness = =

Almost every sizeable Scottish body of water has a kelpie story associated with it , but the most widely reported is the kelpie of Loch Ness . Several stories of mythical spirits and monsters are attached to the loch dating back to 6th @-@ century reports of Saint Columba defeating a monster there . The early 19th @-@ century kelpie that haunted the woods and shores of Loch Ness was tacked up with its own saddle and bridle . A fable attached to the notoriously nasty creature has the Highlander James MacGrigor taking it by surprise and cutting off its bridle , the source of its power and life , without which it would die within twenty @-@ four hours . As the kelpie had the power of speech , it attempted unsuccessfully to bargain with MacGrigor for the return of its bridle . After following MacGrigor to his home , the kelpie asserted that MacGrigor would be unable to enter his house while in possession of the bridle , because of the presence of a cross above the entrance door . But MacGrigor outwitted the creature by tossing the bridle through a window , so the kelpie accepted its fate and left , cursing and swearing . The myth is perpetuated with further tales of the bridle as it is passed down through the family . Referred to as " Willox 's Ball and Bridle " , it had

magical powers of healing ; a spell was made by placing the items in water while chanting " In the name of the Father , the Son and of the Holy Ghost " ; the water could then be used as a cure .

A popular and more recent explanation for the Loch Ness monster among believers is that it belongs to a line of long @-@ surviving plesiosaurs , but the kelpie myth still survives in children 's books such as Mollie Hunter 's *The Kelpie 's Pearls* (1966) and Dick King @-@ Smith 's *The Water Horse* (1990) .

= = Origins = =

Folklorist Gary R. Varner has suggested that the origin of the belief in water horses that preyed on and devoured humans may be a reflection of the human sacrifices once made to appease the gods of water . The association with horses may have its roots in horse sacrifices performed in ancient Scandinavia . Stories of malevolent water spirits served the practical purpose of keeping children away from perilous areas of water , and of warning adolescent women to be wary of attractive young strangers . The stories were also used to enforce moral standards , as they implied that the creatures took retribution for bad behaviour carried out on Sundays . The intervention of demons and spirits was possibly a way to rationalise the drowning of children and adults who had accidentally fallen into deep , fast flowing or turbulent water .

Historian and symbologist Charles Milton Smith has hypothesised that the kelpie myth might originate with the water spouts that can form over the surface of Scottish lochs , giving the impression of a living form as they move across the water . Sir Walter Scott alludes to a similar explanation in his epic poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) , which contains the lines

in which Scott uses " River Demon " to denote a " kelpy " . Scott may also have hinted at an alternative rational explanation by naming a treacherous area of quicksand " Kelpie 's Flow " in his novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1818) .

= = Artistic representations = =

Pictish stones dating from the 6th to 9th centuries featuring what has been dubbed the Pictish Beast may be the earliest representations of a kelpie or kelpie @-@ like creature . Other depictions show kelpies as poolside maidens , as in Draper 's 1913 oil on canvas . Thomas Millie Dow had also sketched the kelpie in 1895 as a melancholy dark @-@ haired maiden balanced on a rock , a common depiction for artists of the period . Folklorist Nicola Bown has suggested that painters such as Millie Dow and Draper deliberately ignored earlier accounts of the kelpie and reinvented it by altering its sex and nature .

Two 30 @-@ metre (98 ft) high steel sculptures in Falkirk on the Forth and Clyde Canal , named *The Kelpies* , borrow the name of the mythical creature to associate with the strength and endurance of the horse ; designed by sculptor Andy Scott , they were built as monuments to Scotland 's horse @-@ powered industrial heritage . Construction was completed in October 2013 and the sculptures were opened for public access from April 2014 .