

# Scottish Myths and Legends



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Scotland has a rich history going back over 2000 years. In the past superstition was common and unusual events were often explained by stories. These stories were then passed on by word of mouth resulting in the many myths and legends around today.

Here is some more information about eight of these Scottish myths and legends:

- The Loch Ness Monster
- The Kelpies
- Selkies
- The Blue Men of Minch
- Bean-Nighe
- Wulver
- Ghillie Dhu
- Red Caps



# The Selkie

The selkie is a creature found in stories from the northern isles of Scotland but they can also be found in stories from Ireland, Faroe and Scandinavia. They are said to be seals whilst in the sea but can shed their skin to become beautiful humans on land. If this magical skin is lost or stolen then the selkie stays in human form until it is found again. In Gaelic stories mermaids and selkies are called by the same name - **maighdeann-mhara** or **maiden of the sea**. However many stories also tell of male selkies and the selkie-folk.



# The Selkie

While most mythological sea or water creatures were thought to be nasty and evil, the selkies were not; perhaps the kind and soulful eyes of the seal have allowed the character of the selkie to develop this way.

Selkie stories are often romantic tragedies that never end happily. If you had hidden a selkie's skin in order to keep them in human form as your husband or wife, once the skin is discovered, the selkie cannot resist the call of the sea and a heartbroken family are left behind. Stories are also told about women who have disappeared; gone to be the wife of a male selkie under the sea.

Some legends say that selkies can only shed their skin and transform from a seal to a human once a year, on Midsummer's Eve, whilst other stories differ.



# Blue Men of Minch

The Blue Men of Minch, also known as storm kelpies, were known as blue-skinned men who lived in the water between the island of Lewis and mainland Scotland. This stretch of water is known as The Minch. The Blue Men of Minch spent their time looking for sailors to drown and boats to sink.

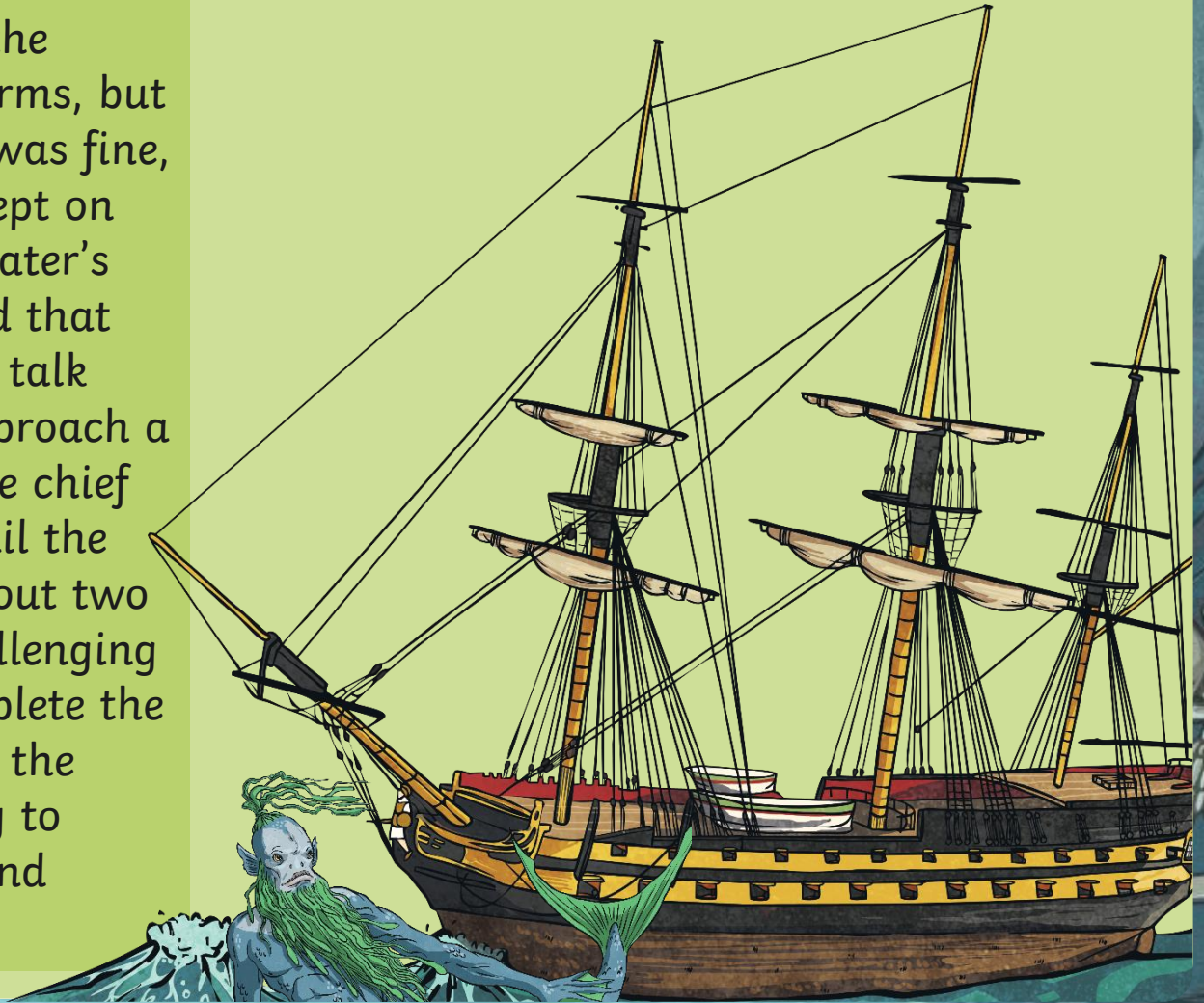


These men were the size of a human but their skins were said to be blue. Their faces were long and grey and their hair and beards were curly and green. The Blue Mens' eyes were small, their noses flat and their mouths were large. Their arms were long and they had fish-tails instead of legs. Stories described them as being very, very strong.




# Blue Men of Minch

The Blue Men had the power to create storms, but when the weather was fine, they floated and slept on or just below the water's surface. Stories said that the Blue Men could talk and they would approach a ship as a group. The chief Blue Man would hail the captain and shout out two lines of poetry, challenging the captain to complete the rhyme. If he failed, the Blue Men would try to overturn the ship and sink it.



# Blue Men of Minch

An encounter with the Blue Men might go like this:



Chief Blue Man: Captain of the ship where are you bound,  
As your ship crosses this fine sea?

Captain: My port is on the horizon found,  
Now leave my good ship be!

Chief Blue Man: My men stand by, my men are here,  
To take you to a watery grave.

Captain: My ship is strong, I have no fear,  
and my crew are fierce and brave!

If the Blue Men were defeated by a quick-witted and sharp-tongued captain, they were said to leave the ship to go on its way safely! The Blue Men have also inspired many sea shanties.





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