

## Luchorpan and Cluricauns, variations on the Leprechauns of Irish Mythology

Just as the Hobbits are central characters in JRR Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings', so are the Luchorpan central characters in 'Windows on Our World', the fantasy trilogy of Les Bill Gates.

So, what is a Luchorpan?

Luchorpan is just another word for Leprechaun.

However, the origins of the word Leprechaun are in dispute. Some scholars of Irish mythology believe the word is derived from the Gaelic 'Luacharma'n', which means 'little body' or 'pygmy'. Others believe the word derives from 'Leath bhrogan' which means 'maker of one shoe' – Leprechauns always make one shoe at a time, never a pair.

Either explanation may be feasible, since Leprechauns are said to be only two to three feet tall and have the reputation of being cobblers.

I am in favour of the first explanation since other derivatives of Leprechaun are Luchorpan, Lubrican, Lubberkin and Lurikeen.

There may also be some connection with Lugh (whose name means 'shining one'), the sun god of the ancient Celts, patron of arts and crafts and leader of the Tuatha dé Danaan ('People of the goddess Danu'), a god of war, mastery, magic and good harvest and said by legend to be a master of many skills.

Whatever the origins, there is no doubting the importance of Leprechauns in Irish folklore.

Described variously as 'fairies', 'sprites' or 'little elves', Leprechauns are said to resemble little old men. However they are not dwarves since their various dimensions bear the same proportions to each other as those of humans. They are mischievous people who love to drink beer or poteen, smoke pipes, dance, and play music.

Leprechauns are hard-working people. Many of them are cobblers and renowned for the quality of the shoes they make. They are called 'fairy cobblers', for they make shoes for elves. Usually solitary, anti-social people, when not working, they often hide alone behind bushes or under trees smoking their pipes.

Leprechauns traditionally dress in garish old-fashioned clothes – trousers with braces, a checked shirt, an apron, a cocked hat and buckled shoes. Green is their favourite colour.

Their other main trade is banking, and Leprechauns have a reputation for thriftiness. One legend says that Leprechauns are self-appointed guardians of an ancient treasure of gold

left in Ireland by the marauding Danes in the ninth century and that they hide their gold in buried pots. This is one reason why they avoid humans whom they regard as greedy creatures.

Leprechauns carry two leather pouches. One contains a magic silver coin that always returns to the pouch once it is paid out. The other contains a gold coin used to bribe his way out of trouble. This coin, it is alleged, will turn into a rock or a leaf once it is given away.

If you capture a Leprechaun, he should grant you three wishes. However, you shouldn't let him out of your grasp or your sight for a second. He'll try to distract you or use any trick he can think of to get away. If your eyes leave the Leprechaun for even one second he will vanish in the blink of an eye.

The Luchorpan characters of 'Windows on Our World' are based on Leprechauns, but there are some differences. For one thing, there are female Luchorpan characters such as Vylin Shoemaker, one of the main characters, and Kaitlyn Fortkeeper, commander of the Guards of Luchor. There isn't, however, any mention of female Leprechauns in traditional Irish legend.

The Luchorpan characters of 'Windows on Our World' live in a mythical country called Luchor (to the west of the Air Mountains), with a small enclave also living in the town of Rivermeet in West Thorland (to the east of the Air Mountains).

The other main Luchorpan characters are Perkin Goldmaster, Alvin Shoemaker, Sawkin Goldmaster and High Lord Trevin. Perkin is a banker who possesses the Seeround Glass – a magic glass that can see around corners. He and Vylin are engaged. Alvin, Vylin's sister, features throughout Book 1, 'Hope', but is replaced early in the second book 'Faith' by Sawkin, a distant relative of Perkin.

Another variant of Leprechauns are Cluricauns. Cluricauns are close cousins of Leprechauns and look very similar, but have pink-tipped noses. They don't wear aprons, but instead wear long blue stockings up to their calves, have gold laces on their caps and have silver buckles on their shoes. They are impeccably well-groomed and well-dressed.

Cluricauns never have any money and have no desire to work, but steal what they want. They like to enter rich men's homes, raiding their pantries and wine cellars, and draining their casks dry. To amuse themselves, they harness sheep and goats, shepherds' dogs or even pigs and revel drunkenly, racing them over the fields and over bogs **after dark and** throughout the night.

In the second book of 'Windows on Our World', we are introduced to the Cluricauns who live in part of Luchor in a small town called Cluritown. In contrast to the Cluricauns of legend, these Cluricauns like skithing (a variation of skiing) and are pulled along by the animal on a pair of planks that resemble skis. The main Cluricaun character is Millikane, a drunk, who kidnaps one of the company.

If you read 'Windows on Our World' by Les Bill Gates, you will not learn a lot about Leprechauns and their place in Irish mythology, but you will learn a lot about Luchorpan as you get drawn in by the fascinating characters created by the author. If you would like to purchase 'Windows on Our World, Part 1: Hope', or learn more, visit Les Bill's website at <http://www.lesbillgates.com/hope.html>

By Les Bill Gates 29/2/08