

## Harriet's Story

When I was a little girl – I think it was when I was about ten years old – myself and a few friends had gone to play in the woods. Normally, we would only go as far as the waterfall, but this particular day for some strange reason we went right to the top of the wood, where it leads onto the moors. We climbed over the wall and went onto the moor itself. I'd never been beyond the woods before and I thought it was very exciting.

After we had been playing for a while someone suggested we have a game of hide and seek. We took it in turns who should seek. When it came to my turn I searched everywhere for my friends, but when I couldn't find them after about twenty minutes I began to get upset – I later found out that they had sneaked off home for a joke!

Anyway, I sat down and began to cry. To make matters worse it got very misty and I didn't know how to get home. I was terribly afraid.

Suddenly out of the mist appeared two very odd-looking creatures, about two feet tall, with large pointed ears and covered in long brown hair, just as you described them.

'Why are you crying?' one of them asked me.

By now I was even more afraid: I had never seen anything like these two creatures before and I didn't know if they were dangerous or not.

'Don't be afraid, we will help you', said the other one.



They spoke perfect English and it was clear by their voices that one was a girl and the other a boy. I explained that my friends had run off and left me and that I didn't know my way off the moor.

'That's OK, we will show you the way ... but it will cost you some sweets', said the boy.

I told him I didn't have any sweets with me, but I promised him I would return with some another day. At first he sulked, and then he started to smile.

'Very well, but you must come alone and you must not tell anyone you have seen us', said the boy. I asked him who he was and where he was from. At first I found it very hard to believe what he told me – and so will you! He said that he and his friends had lived on the moors since the year 1602.'

James let out a huge gasp. 'Never in this world – that's four hundred years – impossible!'

'I said you wouldn't believe me! The boy went on to tell me that one cold November day in 1602, an old woman had been crossing the moor from Pendle in the east to the market town of Chorley. It was a terrible day; the heavens had opened and the old woman had got cold and wet, her feet were bleeding and it was late afternoon. As she walked down from Great Hill, she saw smoke rising from a cottage chimney and decided to try and seek shelter for the night. She walked round the side of the house and came face to face with Isaac Stanworth chopping logs. When he saw the woman approaching, he stopped, resting his axe on the block.

'What do you want, woman?' he demanded. 'There's nothing here for the likes of you. Be off with you or I'll set my dog on you!'



The old woman tried to explain that she meant him no harm and only wanted shelter for the night, but Mr Stanworth would not listen.

The woman tried at every cottage she came to, but no one would give her shelter that day. Even the coaching house would not let her sleep in the stable. The coachman said she was a witch and was evil. It turned out he was right. As the old woman reached the top of the last big hill on the moor she could see the lights of Chorley in the distance. But closer than that was the village of Brinscall.

She turned back and looked in the direction from where she had come. As she did, anger welled up inside the woman and she let out a scream and a curse that echoed through every valley on the moor as it bounced off the

hillsides. It sent shivers down the backs of everyone who heard it and filled them with fear.

'I curse you all who have turned me away this day. May all your children be taken from you and turned into Troglodytes ...

And may they be forced to dwell in the Bowels of the earth ... Forever!'

On hearing this all the parents ran to check upon their children only to find that they were all sleeping peacefully.

However, the next morning, panic set in as one by one the families discovered that their children had disappeared.

That morning the farmers and crofters of the moor gathered and went in search of the old woman. They visited all the inns and hostelries in Chorley and the surrounding villages, but it was no good – she had vanished. For weeks, months even, the people searched for their children, but nothing was to be found of any of them anywhere.

Then one day about six months later, Samuel Rigby, a farmer was out on the moor tending his sheep and repairing a broken wall. As he was bending down doing his work all the sheep began to get agitated and then ran off as fast as they could. Mr Rigby looked around to see what had spooked the sheep but he couldn't see anything; he thought it might have been a fox or a stray dog, but there was nothing. Then he heard a voice call to him, 'Hello, father.'

When he looked over the wall in the direction of the sound, he saw two small hairy creatures standing there, smiling at him.

'Who are you? What are you?' he asked, shaking as he spoke.

'Don't you know us, daddy? It's us, your children Tommy and Lily', said one of them in a voice that he half-recognized.

That was the first time anyone had seen any of their children since that terrible night. It took a few minutes to convince Mr Rigby that these were indeed his two lost children. They looked so different with all the hair and they had grown huge bat-like ears, but there was no mistake, they were his children.

The two small 'Troglodytes' as the witch said they would become, explained that after they went to bed, the children thought they had all had the same dream and when they awoke, they found themselves in a large underground cavern by the side of a big lagoon. At first they were very afraid, but some of the older ones took control and reassured the younger ones that everything would be all right. Before long they set off through the labyrinth of tunnels and they found more and more caverns. In one of the caverns was a huge underground lake that teemed with fish. Mushrooms and herbs grew in other caverns. But in the most amazing one of all they found the remains of Saxon warriors, including swords and shields and there were also bones! It turned out that they had fallen from the roof of the cavern; the hill above had been a Saxon burial ground.

Finding that cavern was the luckiest thing that could have happened to them. When they realized that the bones were from graves above, they set about reburying them in the

cavern and they placed the swords and shields on top of the graves.

After they did this they were about to leave when the whole cavern lit up and a deep voice called to them ... 'Stop!' The voice told them he was the spirit of a Saxon chief and he told them they would be blessed with magic powers for what they had done that day. He told them that they would be watched over and protected by the spirits of the Saxons and that they would want for nothing.

'But what of the old witch and her terrible curse?' asked James.

'Well, it would appear her curse went wrong somewhere along the line that night, because they didn't turn into the fearsome Troglodytes that she said they would; but when she spoke the words "may they dwell in the bowels of the earth forever" it looks like she got the "forever" bit right. They never get ill and they don't grow any older. The only way they can ever die is if they are killed in a violent manner and some of them have been killed over the years. There were thirty-six of them in the beginning, now there are just twenty-four of them left.

'How did the others die?' James enquired.

'Most of them have been shot by people hunting on the moors, but when they die their bodies immediately turn to dust, probably because of their age. So the hunters who have shot them have never found the bodies. Because of this, it has never been proved that they exist.

The only knowledge of them is from people like you and me who have seen them and if you tell anyone that you've seen a Trogglybog, you'll just get laughed at!

'Where did they get the name "Trogglybog" from?' asked

Anna.

'Well, after that first meeting between Samuel Rigby and his children Lily and Tommy, it was agreed that all the parents and their children should meet.

That was to be a very emotional meeting. There were a lot of tears and some very hard decisions had to be taken, but all the parents agreed; their children looked nothing like Troglodytes.

Someone said they should become known as Trogglybogs because they lived in the boglands of the moor and they all agreed that Trogglybogs was a much kinder, cuter name for them than Troglodytes. Probably the hardest decision was that they would have to remain living were they were ... in the caves.'

'I've walked over those moors for years and I have never ever found any caves, so where are they?' asked the totally bemused James.

'You never will find the caves; indeed the only way you'll ever be able to go down into them is if they take you down. The entrances are there, but they cannot be seen by ordinary people like you and I.

I remember Tommybog – that's my pet name for him – telling me of the day they met their parents and how they laughed when Dan Stone tried to follow his son into the caves. Harry –

Dan's son, walked towards a big rock set in the hillside and like a ghost he walked straight through it and disappeared. Dan tried to follow his son by doing the same thing, but he was just met by a solid lump of rock and he ended up with a busted nose. Apparently everyone laughed, then Harry came back out, took hold of his father's hand and led him

through the rock. All the children then took hold of their parents' hands and did the same thing. It's the only way ordinary people can enter the caves.

Another major decision that was taken was that no one should be told of their existence for fear of them being hunted down and killed. That was why they had to remain living in the caves forever.

After that first encounter, I met up with Tommy and Lily a number of times, taking them sweets and gaining their trust. It wasn't long before I was introduced to the rest of them and they took me down into the caverns. It is nothing like you would imagine down there. You would probably think it is dark, damp and cold – not so! It is warm, very dry and the caverns are lit by bright stones that shine like big diamonds embedded in the walls and ceilings of the caves. The lagoons are fresh water and teeming with brightly coloured fish. Food is plentiful, as thanks to their magic powers they can produce food from anything ... they can turn soil into flour and rocks into potatoes.

They can also communicate with all the animals of the moor – they're their friends! So they don't eat meat.'

'That's amazing; do they ever come here to see you?' asked James.

'No, I would never tell them where I lived; I always thought it would be too dangerous. Too many people pass by my cottage and I have always been afraid for their safety. If anyone were to see them, they would be in grave danger. It's a shame in a way, because I haven't seen them for over twenty years. My legs are far too old to carry me onto the moors now', said Harriet.

'Well, what if I were to go onto the moor and bring them down here to see you?' asked James.

Harriet laughed. 'And how do you propose to get them here?

They're terrified of people, especially adults ... they call adults the big people and they believe that the big people just want to shoot them – and in the past that has been the case so many times. I doubt you would have any luck even finding them again, let alone getting them to leave the moor.'

'Harriet's right', said Anna. 'Don't forget, you've been going onto those moors for donkeys years and you've never seen them before, so it's a good chance you might never see them again.'

'Every time you go onto the moor they will be watching you, but you won't know they're there', said Harriet.

'Well, if that's the case, how come I saw them today?' asked James.

'You were just lucky today, you will probably never be that lucky again', replied Harriet.

'What if I was to go up there and shout out loud that I was their friend and that I meant them no harm? I could even take lots of sweets with me as a peace offering.'

Harriet smiled. 'You could try, I suppose, but I wouldn't bank your hopes on it working.'

'Well, I can't just give up, not now that I've seen them; I just have to try. So that's what I will do ... first thing in the morning!'

James looked at his watch. 'Good heavens – look at the time!

We've been here for over three hours.' James and Anna stood up, wished Harriet good night and thanked her for the tea and biscuits.

'If you do have any luck finding them, please promise me you will be careful who you tell; it could be so dangerous for them if the wrong people found out about them', pleaded Harriet.

'Don't worry, I'll tell no one – I don't want any harm to come to them either – it will be our secret', promised James. As they left Miss Bond's house they smiled as they heard all the bolts and chains being fastened again. Neither of them could blame her for being secure, it was such a lonely and desolate spot where she lived.

Walking back up the long lane, James had a wonderful warm feeling inside him. The talk about the Trogglybogs had filled him with excitement. Even the sound of owls screeching as he passed the big Hall did nothing to dampen that warm glow.

'Isn't nature wonderful?' he asked Anna.

'It most certainly is', she agreed.

'I'm going to call in at the shop on the way home, to buy bags full of sweets for tomorrow', said James excitedly.

'You'll not sleep tonight, you're far too excited', said Anna.

On reaching the shop, which was just at the end of the road where James and Anna lived, James went in and Anna carried on home. She decided to make some hot chocolate in the hope that it might relax James before bedtime. James soon came home, carrying half the shop.

'What on earth are you going to do with all that? It must have cost a fortune! You can't carry all that with you onto the moors – and what if you don't find them? You will

have to bring it all back home.' Anna was furious with James for buying so many sweets.

'Calm down – they're not all for me, I've bought some for you for being such an understanding wife', he said with a smug grin on his face.

After watching television for a while and drinking his hot chocolate, James decided to go to bed. He set his alarm clock for six o'clock in the morning and settled down for the night.