

The Fairy Bakers

There was once a Guernsey couple who lived in an old cottage at *St. Briocq* in *St. Pierre du Bois*. After a hard days' labour the husband would go to bed, but his wife would sit up late into the night working at her spinning wheel.

One night she sat in the shadows quietly working by the light of a single oil lamp. Suddenly she was surprised by a knock at the door. A voice from outside asked if the furze oven was still hot, and whether a batch of bread might be baked in it.

She was just about to stand up and go to the door when she heard a second voice. This voice came from *inside* the kitchen, the very room in which she sat. From somewhere close to her in the darkness a voice asked who it was that was knocking at the door. The voice outside said that he was *Le p'tit Colin*. Immediately the kitchen door was opened by unseen hands, and then closed again.

The woman sat motionless in the dark, not daring to breathe. As she listened she could hear a conversation. The second voice belonged to someone or *some-thing* called *Lé grand Colin*. She realised that what she was witnessing were two Guernsey '*pouques*' or fairy-folk going about their business.



Listening closely, she heard them clattering about the kitchen, muttering to themselves. She heard the squeak of the iron furze-oven door as it was opened and then closed again. Some time passed, then she heard the sound of the oven door being opened once more and the most wonderful smell of freshly baked bread filled the whole kitchen.

Shortly after, the kitchen door opened as if by itself, then closed again and the room fell completely silent.

It was some time before the woman felt that it was safe to move. She cautiously stood up, took the oil-lamp from its hook and searched the kitchen from one end to the other. There was no one to be found, and nothing to be heard. However, when she reached the kitchen table she was delighted to find a freshly baked loaf of bread - still warm. She understood then, that this was a gift from the *pouques* to say 'thankyou' for letting them use her oven.

Artwork by David Wyatt. © Guernsey Museums & Art Gallery

Story by Guernsey Museums, adapted from Marie de Garis' *Folklore of Guernsey*