

Giant's Causeway



Created by Giants or
Mother Nature?

Part 1: Giant vs. Giant

- Once upon a time, in a land called Ireland, there lived a giant named Finn Mac Cool.
- At fifty two feet six inches, he was a relatively small giant.





- But across the sea in Scotland there was a rival giant named Benandonner.
- He was truly gigantic.



The two Giants hollered across the sea of Moyle, each demanding a trial of strength. This was agreed, and hospitable Finn offered to make the contest possible by building a rocky causeway between the two countries. But to do this he needed some helpers...

...which tells how Finn built a path across the sea from County Antrim to Benandonner's lair - Fingal's cave on the island of Staffa, but the work was so laborious that Finn fell asleep with exhaustion...



Oonagh was Finn's wife, a giantess, she woke up early the next morning to find Finn sound asleep. Then she heard the sound of thunderous footsteps...



... and saw the mighty Benandonner approaching. He was truly gigantic. Finn would be no match against this Scottish giant. Quick thinking Oonagh covered the sleeping Finn with a nightgown and bonnet... "Where's Finn?" bellowed Benandonner, "Where is the coward hiding?" He peered at the sleeping Finn.



SHHH! "Be quiet,"
Oonagh warned
Benandonner, "or you'll
waken the bairn!"



Benandonner
panicked. If the child
was this big, how
much bigger might
Finn be? He did not
stay to find out... He
hastily retreated
across the causeway,
destroying it in his
wake...



Part 2: Mother Nature

Sixty million years ago Antrim was subject to intense volcanic activity, when highly fluid molten rock was forced up through fissures in the chalk bed to form an extensive lava plateau.





The dramatic cliff like edge of the plateau forms the Causeway coastline. The larger fissures, through which the lava flowed, can be clearly seen as bands of dark rock which cut down the cliff faces and jut out to sea. There were three periods of volcanic activity which resulted in the flows, known as the Lower, Middle and Upper Basalts.

It is the Middle Basalts rocks which forms the columns of the Giants Causeway. The rapidly cooling lava contracted and variations in the cooling rate resulted in the world famous columnar structure.





The columns are mainly hexagonal though there are some with up to eight sides. Weathering of the top of of the lower Basalts formed the Inter Basaltic Bed - the band of reddish rock which is a feature of the area. The same action of the weather created circular formations round a nugget of basalt which are known locally as "giants eyes".

The Causeway became widely known from the 1700's as the 'Eighth Wonder of the World', large numbers of visitor's come to view this amazing array of basalt columns - it is estimated that there are around 40,000 in total.



At the heart of one of Europe's most magnificent coastlines its unique rock formations have, for millions of years, stood as a natural rampart against the unbridled ferocity of Atlantic storms. The rugged symmetry of the columns never fails to intrigue and inspire visitors. To stroll on the Giants Causeway is to voyage back in time. Your imagination will travel along stepping stones that lead to either the creative turbulence of a bygone volcanic age or into the mists and legends of the past.



Music by:
Talitha MacKenzie
CD Title: Solas

