



An Unusual Catch

Humour played a prominent part in the life of the crofting community and the village 'ceilidh house' was a natural place to indulge in some hilarious forms of leg pulling. There was always a healthy rivalry and competition between neighbouring villages, and we recall one occasion when a worthy sharp witted friend from Marvig called Alasdair, who was noted for his humorous disposition, came to our Calbost 'ceilidh house' somewhat later on a winter's evening than was usual.

Someone asked what kept him so late, and he went on to explain that he and some friends from his village went out earlier in the day to set a few fixed herring nets in a sheltered bay, and in the usual way they went out to check the nets a few hours after darkness.

As might be expected from a man who spent his whole life at the fishing, our host Angus Morrison, raised himself up on his elbow in bed 'leabaith an teine', and enquired eagerly from the visitor if they had got any herring that night. Our visitor saw the opportunity to pull the old man's leg, and he responded at once by saying, 'No, we did not get any herring, but a most unusual thing happened. When we took up the end of the first net "cluais an lin" there was a crow caught in the net well below the surface of the sea'.

Quick as a shot, without any hesitation or the slightest visible indication of disbelief, the old man responded and took up the challenge by solemnly assuring the visitor that he fully believed him, and as he dropped down on his elbow to a comfortable stretched position on top of the bed, he set about confirming his belief by launching into a long account of a similar occurrence he himself experienced at one time.

'On a fine Monday morning in the spring of the year we set off from the local anchorage with the "Crocus" carrying a full sail in a fairly strong south westerly breeze with Kenneth Nicolson at the helm. We set course for Rubha Ghearrloch because there were reports of good shots of herring from that area before the weekend'. After filling in a few more details they arrived at their destination after a record crossing of The Minch.

They set the nets, and as usual they had a cup of tea before turning in and leaving Alasdair Aonghais on watch.

When they were called a few hours later, the wind had died down and it was a clear bright moonlit night. By this time everybody was waiting with bated breath not knowing what was to come, but aware that the climax of the story was approaching.

The old man went on in his own serious way. 'When we took up the net nearest to the boat there, to our very great surprise, were two rabbits caught in the net "aig an auros", which was right down at the bottom some twelve fathoms below the surface of the sea and a few miles from the shore'.

At that point the whole company erupted into roars of laughter, and our guest from Marvig understood that he was no match for our host. Crows could conceivably be found in a net near the shore, but it was completely incredible to find two rabbits in a net some seventy feet below the surface of the sea a few miles offshore.

It was our Marvig friend who told us that one against himself.

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