



Over 800 years ago in 1215, the Dunloe Castle was built, high upon a hill. The castle was built by the Norman Fitzgeralds who used this castle to control the passage through the Gap of Dunloe. The Gap of Dunloe is a very important water passage through which the river Loe flows and this is where the Gap got its name. It is a mountain pass and because of this it was a hugely advantageous passageway to control, small and quite narrow, only 11km from north to south.

The castle was a great place to see danger coming from a good distance away. The last person to live in the castle was a man named MacThomas (meaning son of Thomas) and the last fairy to live there was a fairy named Stewart. MacThomas was exceptional at keeping watch across the waters, often alerting people in Killarney to danger long before it arrived. People wondered how he managed to see the dangers coming – day or night. MacThomas never missed a trick. However, what the history books don't tell us is the secret to MacThomas' success: the reason he was always one step ahead of each threat was his fairy friend, Stewart. Deep inside the castle's keep, MacThomas had found a tiny wooden door, not quite as colourful as the wooden doors our fairies have now but a tiny wooden door it was all the same. Eager not to upset the fairies, MacThomas cleared all the furniture from outside the tiny door in the hope that they would be kind to him. Back then humans were very nervous around fairies, often giving them gifts in return for good fortune. Fairy Stewart had lived in the keep for many years but no human had ever shown him the kindness that MacThomas had shown him by clearing the area around his home. Leaving his fairy door one night, Stewart flew to see the human who had helped him move freely. While flying towards MacThomas's bedroom, Stewart noticed a flickering light move in the Loe river. He stopped in the window to look. His little fairy heart started to beat faster as he noticed a number of boats sailing towards the Gap!

Stewart could hear MacThomas was asleep. If he did not wake soon the foreign boats would be upon them in no time. Stewart knew he owed MacThomas a favour after what the human had done for him. So with all his fairy might, he pushed a jug from the windowsill and watched as it crashed loudly to the stairs. MacThomas woke with fright, springing from his bed and to his window where he saw the oncoming danger. He alerted the others and everyone sprung to action to defend the gap. A couple of days later, MacThomas sat and thought back over that night. How was it the jug fell to the floor? His eye stopped on the fairy door. He knelt low beside it and saw that were small pieces of the jug outside. MacThomas smiled. "Thank you, little friend" he said and left a small piece of bread for Stewart. Stewart of course heard every word and from that day forward the two looked after each other. They showed each other kindness and consideration and so a great friendship was born. Stewart still lives inside the Castle's keep but after MacThomas was gone, he became lonely. The Queen of all the fairies, Queen Kate, visited Stewart on a recent trip and asked him if he would like some woodland fairies to move in for company. Stewart was delighted! Not long after, the fairies arrived. There are 20 fairies living here in The Dunloe Hotel & Gardens, each with their own personality. Try to visit as many as you can – and be sure to whisper hello to Stewart who lives close to the door of the Castle, because being kind and helpful to fairies always has its rewards!

Place a tick beside each
fairy when you find them!