

HOLIDAY NOTES IN ATHOLE, PERTHSHIRE. By JAMES MACKINTOSH  
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*Curing and other Wells, &c.*—On the farm of Easter Kindrochit, where at one time stood the house of the Lairds of Kindrochit, there is a water-worn block of the grey stone of the district, 4 feet 6 inches long by 2 feet 6 inches broad, and about 2 feet above ground. On the top, towards the west end, there is a natural hollow or crevice, 18 inches long, 4 inches broad, and about 6 inches deep, in which rain-water gathers, and which, when full, may contain about two quarts. The stone is about 200 yards east from the farmhouse, and is called "Clach'n dru'chasd" (the whooping-cough stone). From time immemorial the water has been famed for curing this infantile trouble, children from all parts being brought there by their parents to drink the water, which was given to them in a spoon made from the horn of a living cow.<sup>1</sup> There have been no recent cases known of the water having been used, but up to thirty years ago the practice was quite common.

On the same farm, 20 yards directly east from the farmhouse, there is a large irregular-shaped water-worn boulder, with a basin cut out on the upper surface. The basin or cup is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep. The stone is 7 feet long, 5 feet broad, and 2 feet above ground. On the next farm east from Kindrochit, named "Pitaltdonich," or "Balan-

<sup>1</sup> I referred to this stone as *a well* in a former paper, page 47 of the Society's *Transactions*, 1885-86, but I had not then seen it.

donich" (the town or hamlet of the Sunday burn), there is a well of running water, famous in the old days for curing "all the ills that flesh is heir to." It was used chiefly on the first Sunday of May, old style, hence its name and that of the place ("alt didonich," the Sunday burn; and *pit*, or *bal*, a town).

Early on these Sunday mornings crowds of people used to go to the well, and those who were first were considered lucky, as they secured "the cream of the water." Several trees stood round it (only one of which is now left), and these used to be covered with bits of cloth, ribbons, and common pins,—indeed, all sorts of offerings; while the well itself came in for a goodly share of the gifts in the shape of buttons and coins. Of course no cure could be expected unless a donation of some kind were made.

The well is not known to have been used for nearly forty years, and is now only remembered by the old people. It is situated 80 or 90 yards direct west from a small cottage called "Tigh an tobar" (the well-house) and might still, with a little attention, be made pretty and attractive. The water appeared to be quite pure, and would soon gather if looked after.

There is a story told of a woman from Glen Fincastle having been for years a martyr to rheumatism; she was brought over the hill in a barrow, and after having bathed her limbs and feet in the well, was able to walk home—a distance of four miles.

Going still farther east, passing Invervack, and on to the farm of Balan Stewart or Stewarton, there is a spring of delightfully cool water. It is about 300 yards south from the farmhouse, on the west bank of the burn "Alt Vack," and about 20 feet above the bed of the stream. It is called "Fuaran an chesach" (the fever-well). The water was supposed to cure any kind of fever, hence the name; but no recent case of attempted cure is known.

Returning to Struan, of which church St Fillan is said to have been the patron saint, and whose name is still remembered in connection with it, there is a well named "Tobar Faolan" (Fillan's well). It is nearly 100 yards west from the church, at the foot of the bank, and close to the river Garry. It is overgrown with grass and weeds, but the water is

as clear and cool as it may have been in the days of the saint. There is no tradition of its having been a curing or healing well, except that in pre-Reformation days, when a drought prevailed, and rain was much wanted, an image of the saint which was kept in the church used to be taken in procession to the well, and in order that rain might come, the feet of the image were placed in the water; and this of course was generally supposed to have the desired effect. The soil of the neighbourhood was dry and stony, and it became a proverb in Gaelic "Mur faidh Sgir an t-Sruthain aileadh agus fras, cha chin an t-arbhar" (If the parish of Struan get not blink and shower, the corn will not grow.) The well is now almost forgotten.

A market was held here on the saint's day, the first Friday after New Year's Day, old style, and was named "Feill Faolan" (St Fillan's Fair); the stance, being on the field immediately west from the church, is still called Croft an'taggart or priest's croft. The market is abolished. Between the church and the croft there is a considerable knoll, about 30 feet high, flat, and nearly square on the top. It measures 50 or 60 feet across either way, and the foundations of a building are distinctly marked; it also appears to have been surrounded by a ditch. It is supposed never to have been occupied, as the laird who had commenced the building never finished it, being disgusted at his neighbour on the other side of the river having built a castle much higher. It may, however, have been a fort in the early days, although it is now known as "Tom an tigh mhor" (the big house knoll or mound).

In the churchyard there are two standing stones, which have been described and figured by Dr Laing of Newburgh in the *Proceedings*, vol. vii. p. 443. The stone nearest to the church is about 8 paces from the south-east corner, and is now only about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet above ground, but I remember it being at least double that height. It has formed the headstone of the Macfarlanes, tenants of Invervack, for several generations. Between twenty and thirty years ago, while opening a grave, the stone slipped down, and nearly killed the grave-digger. It appears now as only the stump of what it was, although it must be 7 or 8 feet in length. A cross is rudely cut on the east face. About 16 paces west from this stone there is another one built into the churchyard wall. It is

3 feet 6 inches above ground and 1 foot 2 inches broad ; it has a cross also cut on the east face. This one is remembered to have been one of the gate-posts of the old entrance to the churchyard.

*Cup-marked Stones, Standing Stones, &c.*—Glen Errochdie, through which the river of that name flows, extends for about 6 miles from Struan (where the river falls into the Garry) westward to Trinafour, where it is bridged by General Wade's great highland road from Inverness to Crieff. The glen was disappointing in being almost without cup-marked stones. After much searching and inquiry, however, I did find two of them, but there was only one cup on each. I think they are the first cups I have met with sculptured on granite. One is at the farm of Auchinruidh (the field of the shiellings), about a mile west from Struan, on the south side of the river. It is an irregular square-shaped block of grey granite, standing on its edge at the north-east corner of what used to be the garden of one of the old houses. It is 4 feet 4 inches high, and about the same breadth, by 2 feet in thickness; the east side is perfectly flat, and in the centre there is a large artificial hole, 9 inches deep, 5 inches across the mouth, tapering to the bottom, where it is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. A little to the south of this hole in the stone there is a beautifully formed cup,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep. The centre of the cup is about 12 inches from the centre of the hole. Shortly after seeing this stone I was informed by Mr Duncan MacDiarmid, the son of a former tenant, that when he was a boy, upwards of thirty years ago, while they were trenching the ground round the house, this stone stood or lay with the flat side uppermost on the top of a knoll east from the house; and it was then removed on a sledge to the spot where it now stands, the knoll or mound having been levelled. There is no tradition or story regarding it, but the probability is that it was a "bore-stone" for a flag or signal, as the knoll on which it had lain would command a view of the whole glen to the west, and eastward over the Vale of Athole as far as the Castle of Blair, and beyond it.

The other stone is on the farm of Kinaldie, about a mile west from Auchinruidh, but on the north side of the river. It is situated about 300 yards direct north from the present farmhouse (which is unoccupied

and going to ruin). It is a travelled water-worn block of grey granite, 4 feet long 2 feet 6 inches broad and 3 feet above ground. It has a single cup-mark near the upper edge, about 3 inches diameter and 1 inch deep. Near this cup on the upper surface of the stone there is a remarkable hollow, like a foot-mark, 11 inches long and 3 inches deep. This, however, appears to be a natural feature of the stone, but it will be a guide to any one in search of the cup. There is a small hole near the foot-mark, as if a commencement had been made to bore the stone for blasting.

In front of the farmhouse of Kinaldie there is a standing stone which may at some time have been one of a circle. It is 3 feet 3 inches above ground, 2 feet 10 inches broad, and 1 foot in thickness, and may apparently have stood in its present position for ages.

In a field on the north side of the Garry near Bruar, and slightly east from the old toll-house, there is seen from the road a large standing stone, known as "Clach'n iobairt" (the stone of sacrifice). It stands 4 feet 9 inches above ground, is 4 feet broad, and 1 foot 9 inches in thickness. It may have formed one of a circle, as in the Old Statistical Account of the parish it is mentioned that there were two or three more stones lying beside it, but these are now gone.

There is a place near Kinloch-Rannoch known as "Ach'n iobairt" (the field of sacrifice).

At Bridge of Tilt there is a disused burying-ground named "Cladh Gille Andreas" (the burying-place of St Andrew's disciple). It is situated immediately behind the Bridge of Tilt Hotel, and is now used as a stackyard. Stone coffins and human bones have occasionally been found, and the river Tilt, which bounds it on the west, has no doubt when in flood carried away a considerable portion of it.

In the wood, and to the south of this burying-ground, there is a grey monolith, known as St Andrew's Cross, which at one time marked the stance of Andermas Fair, a market named in Gaelic "Feill Andreas," which was held in the parish at one time, but is now held at Perth.

In the Statistical Account of the parish of Kilmaveonog, now merged in Blair Athole, it is stated that this stone was removed to its present

site in Duke James's time. He was the second Duke of Atholl, and died in 1764.

Another market was held in this parish, named "Feill Espic Eoin" (Bishop Eunan's Fair), on the saint's day, the 7th September. The church in this parish was dedicated to the saint, and his name is remembered by the Fair (which, however, is now abolished) and by the quaint little chapel, surrounded by its ancient burying-ground, which gave its name to the parish. There is a triangular piece of ground on the banks of the Tilt quite near known as "dal an t Saggairt"—no doubt part of the old church lands; and as the priest lived at Blair he had to ford the river on his way to and from church. This ford still bears his name.