

I.

NOTES ON OLD WELLS AND A STONE CIRCLE AT KENMORE.

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In the old *Statistical Account* of Kenmore, published in 1796, the Rev. Colin Macvean, who was then minister of the parish, wrote as follows about wells:—

“In this parish are several Tiobaits, or wells, the waters of which were of old supposed to be possessed of healing qualities; some were good for the toothache, some for sore eyes, etc. Now, however, they are very seldom visited.”

Since coming to the parish, thirteen years ago, I have endeavoured to trace the “tiobaits” (properly “tiobairts”) referred to, and have been successful in locating five of them.

The first is situated in the glen leading from Claggan, above Ardtalnaig to Dunan, near the source of the river Almond. The glen is known as A Chalfhinn, which means “the white meadow.” This pass used to be much frequented in olden times by people who travelled between Loch Tayside and Strathearn. The well was close to the path which leads through the glen on the west side at the foot

of the Shee of Ardtalnaig, about 1 mile from the shepherd's house at Tomflour. Its water was believed to be an effective cure for pining infants, and since coming to Kenmore I met a woman who, fifty years ago, had accompanied a mother on foot all the way from Aberfeldy to this well with an infant child. The child improved in health after its immersion at the dawn of day in the cold spring.

The second well is on the farm of Acharn, above the Falls and close to the old bridge known as Drochaid Bhragaid (the bridge of the brae). Until a generation ago, people were in the habit of going there to wish, when they threw in small offerings. It has now fallen into neglect and is absorbed in the marsh.

The third well is on the farm of Portbane, about 1 mile west from Kenmore, and close to the public road leading to Acharn. At one time it may have been a dip well, but now the spring issues as a strong spout from the bank. I have not been able to ascertain for what ailment its waters were considered a remedy, but consumptive persons have been known to develop a great craving for this water and had it brought to them. It is still called An Tiobairt, and no doubt gave its name to the old village which at one time was situated some distance above it on the farm, and which was known as Bal-natiobairt. The old dry stone walls may still be seen.

The fourth well lies at an elevation of 1000 feet on the hillside, about  $\frac{5}{8}$  of a mile south-east of the famous stone circle at Croftmorag, about 3 miles east from Kenmore. It is called Tobar nan dileag (the well of the drips). The water drips from a rock into a basin below. It was regarded as a certain cure for whooping-cough, and there are old people still in the neighbourhood who were brought there as children when they had that trouble.

The fifth well is probably the best known of the whole five. It is situated on the north side of the river Tay, about 2 miles below Kenmore Bridge. It is at the foot of a high bank that encloses the meadow of Poll Tairbh. It is a splendid spring of fine water and scarcely ever varies in its flow. A short distance to the south there used to stand the ancient church, churchyard, and vicarage of Inschadney, as well as the village of that name. All these were removed about a hundred and twenty years ago, when the fields in the neighbourhood were included in the Taymouth policies. Nothing remains to-day to indicate the important character of the place except the road which passed to the old ford on the river, and the foundation of the wall that enclosed the churchyard. Here, it may be mentioned, is buried the Dean of Lismore, who made the first collection of Scottish Gaelic poetry. So far, indeed, has modern vandalism gone, that a wire

fence passing through the sacred acre divides the churchyard between two different proprietors. The well is surrounded by a few fine old beeches and oaks, and there is a broad walk leading down the grassy bank to it. Great numbers of people frequented this well in olden times, and after the policies were enclosed it was found necessary to open the gates to admit the pilgrims, especially at such seasons as Bealltuinn (May day, O.S.). Ten years ago the Marchioness of Breadalbane, whose attention had been directed to the sacred character of these wells, had this one and that on Portbane cleaned. The old man who did the work told me he found a stone with markings on it at the Inschadney well. He had placed the stone in the bottom, and I went and got it lifted out. It is flat and irregular in shape, measuring 21 inches in length and 16 inches in breadth, and bears a rude cross that had been cut into it with a sharp instrument near the centre. The cross is little more than a deep scratch, and somewhat resembles a St Andrew's cross, the limbs of which measure  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches and 7 inches in length respectively. After finding the stone I examined the bottom, and discovered in the mud a very rudely made circular stone cup, 7 inches in diameter and  $2\frac{7}{16}$  inches in height, with a cavity  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inch deep and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches across. A bit was broken from the rim, but I afterwards found it, so that the cup is now entire. I also picked out three corroded copper coins, three metal buttons, an opalescent glass bead, and six wire-headed pins which had been thrown in at different periods. One coin is a farthing of George III. dated 1806, but the other two are much older; however, they are so worn and thin from corrosion that they cannot be identified. I cannot find that the well had any association with a saint, but it is evident that it was regarded as being under Christian patronage from the fact of the cross on the stone and its contiguity to the sacred site of Inschadney.

STONE CIRCLE ON THE FARM OF ALECKICH (REMONY HILL).

In the *Proceedings* of this Society, vol. xliii. p. 271, there is a description of a stone circle situated in a wood above Remony on what was once the farm of Aleckich. I wish to supplement the information that is there given by my predecessor, Rev. J. B. MacKenzie, F.S.A.Scot., and by Mr J. D. Macleod, Edinburgh, who made a very accurate plan, which appears on p. 272.

I paid several visits last summer to this lonely and elevated spot, and examined the ground for stones, where the wide spaces between those indicated on the plan suggested that others might be concealed

beneath the turf. There would appear to be three stones missing, which would make the circle to consist of nine in all when it was entire. With little trouble, at a depth of only 3 inches, I located a large flat stone measuring 5 feet 6 inches by 4 feet 8 inches. It had stood on the north-western arc of the circle half-way between the fallen stone on the west and the broken standing stone on the north-north-west. It had fallen outwards. The foundation of the wall, built probably some seventy years ago to enclose the plantation, rested on the edge of the stone. The ground along the circumference of the circle between the three stones on the eastern side was carefully probed, but the rod touched only small loose stones.

I next turned up the centre of the circle, and at a depth of 5 inches below the surface came upon a dark deposit. It extended over a space of 2 feet square and was about 5 inches in depth. It was mixed with a white limy substance consisting of calcined bones, bits of which along with a sample of the dark substance I brought to the Museum. A bit of charcoal from the deposit revealed the lines of cleavage in the wood. There is no peat at the spot, although the elevation, which is at least 1200 feet, might suggest it. The surrounding soil is of a reddish colour, and quite unlike the deposit which must have been placed there, and which was probably a burial after cremation.