

Lyndon, this is just a rough first draft. Alter as you see fit. Dot

ST COLUMBA'S WELL, INVERMORISTON

The aims of the project at this site are to :

Make the site safe for visitors

To tidy up and conserve the site

To interpret the site

To ensure a maintenance programme is put in place

SITE DESCRIPTION (Map 1)

The site lies below the road and Wade bridge over the River Moriston. As the site is low lying in natural woodland there are problems with water logging of the surrounding ground, and potential flooding during very wet periods. Access to the site is by a set of stone steps which during the autumn and winter become clogged with leaves and detritus. The damp nature of the area also means that they tend towards slippiness. There is a wooden handrail at the side of the steps, but this is much dilapidated and needs to be replaced. Once the bottom of the steps is reached the visitor encounters a muddy morass which must be crossed to reach the well. The well itself comprises a stone set square, upon which "ST Columba's Well" is inscribed. The well itself is deceptive – the water level appears shallow, but in reality will be much deeper. (See map 1)

OWNERSHIP

The site is currently owned by Invermoriston Estate, who are keen for the Council to take the site over, and have offered the land to the Council. Due to the legal fees involved in transferring the land to Council ownership, it is suggested that it would be most cost effective for the Council to lease the land from the Estate. This should ensure that the Estate will not bear the cost of any public liability, as it will fall to the Council.

PROPOSALS (Map 2)

The first step is to clean up and make safe the steps. A new wooden handrail will be located at the northern side of the steps. This will be continued round as shown on the map, effectively delineating a viewing platform. The handrail will be supplemented at lower heights by wooden rails to discourage children from climbing through. The steps need to be cleared of all vegetation, their stability ensured – pointing may be necessary, and cleaned of moss/mildew growth. This may be undertaken with either chemicals or wire brushes.

Duckboarding will be laid in the area delineated by the handrail to prevent feet slipping.

The well itself requires to be cleared of debris which has fallen in over the years. Obviously it will not be possible to fully empty the well of such debris, but as much as possible will be removed. The stone setting around the well needs to have the moss removed from it. Wire brushes and chemicals cannot be used for this – simply water and a soft brush or cloth. This work on the actual well needs to be undertaken by an archaeologist, to ensure that (a) any artefacts within the well are recovered, and (b) the well structure is not damaged.

Richard Duncan of CLS advises that there is an overflow pipe from the well which is blocked. This, and the area around the well needs to be cleared of debris to minimise standing water problems.

An interpretive board can be attached either to the handrail overlooking the well, or on the wall behind the well. In conjunction with this, a sign to the well is needed at the top of the steps, and some sort of information about the well should be relayed in the car park. Interpretation regarding the well must be tied in with details about Columba, and the reputed chapel site.

Finally, there needs to be a gate at the top of the steps. There is a wire fence there at present, into which the gate will need to be inserted.

MAINTENANCE

A 1991 Cultural and Leisure Services predecessor, (probably Inverness District Council, Recreation department) then agreed to take over the maintenance of the well site. For a number of reasons this never took place. Richard Duncan has agreed that the Inverness Area CLS will provide regular maintenance of the site. This should include:

Removal of moss/detritus from the steps

Safety check on the handrails and duckboarding

Removal of fallen leaves

Checks that the interpretaion has not been vandalised/stolen.

DML, 25/11/1999