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IN THE MATTER OF THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS ACTS, 1913 AND 1931.

To Charles Julian Brewster MacPherson, Esq., of Balavil,
Balavil House, Kingussie, Inverness-shire.

the owner of the Monument known as Earth-house situated on the southern slope of a field 940 yards south-west of Lynvoan, 500 yards north-west of the Carrbridge-Kingussie road at its nearest point and 480 yards east-north-east of the Allt Cealgach at its nearest point

being the subjects indicated in red colour on the annexed plan and being part of the property known as Balavil Mains Farm

situated in the Parish of Alvie and
County of Inverness

In accordance with the provisions of Section 6 of the Ancient Monuments Act, 1931, the Commissioners of His Majesty's Works and Public Buildings hereby give you notice that it is their intention to include the Monument above specified in a list of monuments to be published by them under Section 12 of the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act, 1913.

Dated this 26th day of September 1934

By Order of the Commissioners.

Secretary.

I, Edward Francis H. H. H. (Officer in Secretariat) in the Office of the Commissioners of H.M. Works and Public Buildings duly authorised by them in that behalf hereby certify that the notice of which the foregoing is a duplicate together with a copy of the plan annexed and signed as relative hereto was served on the before named Charles Julian Brewster MacPherson, Esq., of Balavil.

by posting on the 26th day of September 1934

between the hours of 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock ^{after} noon at the

Parliament Street Post Office, London, a copy of the same to him

in a registered letter addressed as follows:—

C.J. B. MacPherson, Esq., of Balavil,
Balavil House,
Kingussie, Inverness-shire.

Register on behalf of the within named Commissioners of His Majesty's Works and Public Buildings in the Register of the County
of Inverness.

12.

W. S.,
Edinburgh, Agent.

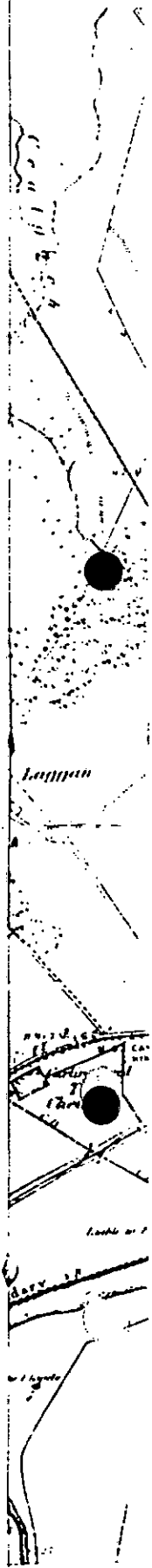
SCOTLAND
OF SASINES.

Inverness.

597 FOLIO 36

PRESENTED & REGISTERED, 26 November 1934

Donald Stewart
SHERIFF



Patrick Duff

This is the plan referred to in my Certificate of Service of

Notice affecting *Kyrchat*

Kurch-house

dated *26th Sept 1931* and is signed as

relative thereto.

7. 11. 34

MEMBERS and RECORDS of SCOTLAND
GENERAL REGISTER OF SASINES
Duplicate of this Plan
received <u><i>26th November 1934</i></u>
<i>On West District</i>
KEEPER

Walter Finlay W.S.
55 Frederick Street.
Edinburgh.

26th November 1934
10-30-11
John D. Bell

Inverness Lib 594: 26

10
22 JAN 1935

C15/1
D.P.
S.M.
M.M.

CERTIFICATE

OF

SERVICE OF NOTICE

BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF H.M.
WORKS ETC. UNDER SECTIONS 6
AND 16 OF THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS
ACT 1951.

5/2

1934.

Affecting Earth-house south-west
of Lythorn, near Lynchat in the
Parish of Alvie and County of
Inverness.

WALTER FINLAY, W.S.
Solicitor to H.M. Works etc.

Souterrain, Raitts, Lynchat, Badenoch & Strathspey.

"The distinguished philosopher, Sir David Brewster (the son-in-law of the translator of Ossian's poems), while resident at Belleville in 1835, made a careful exploration of this remarkable cave, and in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries in 1863 (when he was Principal of the University of Edinburgh) he thus describes it:-

'This cave is situated on the brow of a rising ground in the village of Raitts, on the estate of Belleville. It is about two miles from Kingussie, and about half a mile north of the great road from Perth to Inverness. In 1835, when it was first pointed out to me, it was filled up with stones and rubbish taken from the neighbouring grounds. Upon removing the rubbish I was surprised to find a long subterraneous building, with its sides faced with stones, and roofed in by gradually contracting the side walls and joining them with very large flattish stones. The form of the cave was that of a horse-shoe. Its convex side was turned to the south, and the entrance to it was at the middle of this side by means of two stone steps, and a passage of some length. The part of the cave to the left hand was a separate apartment with a door. A lock of an unusual form, almost destroyed by rust, was found among the rubbish. The formation of the roof by the gradual contraction of the walls is shown in the drawing. There is no tradition among the people respecting the history of this cave, and, so far as I know, it had not been previously noticed.'

"In stating that there was no tradition among the people at the time regarding the cave, Sir David must have been misinformed. 'Old Biallid's' account of it appears to have been written before 1835, and in a quaint diary in my possession, which belonged to the Rev. William Blair, who was minister of Kingussie from 1724 to 1786, there is the following reference to the cave in a description of a journey from Edinburgh to Inverness:-

'We visited the Cave of Clan Ichilnew, which is not far from the side of the highroad. We descended into it, and found the greater part of it fallen in, and could only perceive a dark hole through which we could not see the farther end. The stones that support the roof are of an enormous size - in length about twelve feet. The accounts given of this subterranean mansion are various. The people there give this account: That in primitive ages, when anarchy prevailed throughout the island, the country was infested with men of a gigantic stature who had often made fruitless attempts to conquer the island. Being repulsed at a time when they made their last and most formidable attack, such as were not killed in the flight or escaped by sea fled into the mountains, and being closely pursued by the enemy until night stopt the pursuit, they advanced so far as the Spay, and in a night's time finished the said cave, and lived there for some time, till, by the continual searches of the conquerors, they were at last discovered and every man killed.'

"Here is 'Old Biallid's' account of the cave, under the title of 'The MacNiven's Cave':-

'This artificial cave is on the farm of Raitts in Badenoch, and is still nearly entire. Its history is as follows: When the Clan Chattan lost their patrimony in Lochaber by the marriage of the heiress of the clan to the son of the Thane of Fife, the MacPhersons, who opposed the pretensions of the husband to the chieftainship, were gradually expelled their possessions, and found an asylum in Badenoch, then occupied by the MacNivens, as vassals of Comyn Earl of Badenoch. The emigration from Lochaber continued for several

years, but it was not until the restoration of Robert Bruce and the downfall of the Comyns that the chief of the MacPhersons made a purchase of the lands of Cluny, etc., and came to reside there. In consequence of that event the MacNivens became alarmed, and took every opportunity of insulting Cluny, who was not then sufficiently strong to resent or punish their conduct. An occurrence, however, happened which brought matters to a crisis. The chief of the MacNivens, who resided at Breakachy, and was Cluny's next neighbour, pointed Cluny's cattle, and as there was much bad blood between the parties, it was considered dangerous that the men should come into contact. It was therefore resolved to send Cluny's daughter to relieve the cattle; but instead of paying that deference due to the rank and sex of the young lady, she was treated in the most brutal manner: her petticoats were cut off, and in that state she was sent home to her family. The cattle were also sent home, but the bull's tongue was cut out, which in these times was considered as a direct challenge. Such a gross outrage could not but inflame the MacPherson's to the highest pitch, and as they were not equal to their adversaries in point of numbers, one called Allaster Caint collected a band of one hundred resolute men, with whom he set out at night, and before the sun rose next morning there was not a living male MacNiven in the lordship of Badenoch except eighteen that contrived to conceal themselves in the woods of Raitts. These men managed to elude the vengeance of Allaster Caint until they constructed a cave under the floor of their dwelling-house, and which they did with such skill and secrecy that they were enabled to keep possession of the place for several years. They slept securely in the cave at night, and in the daytime they kept so good a look-out that their enemies could never get them into their power until the cave was discovered by the following stratagem: Allaster Caint concealed himself under pretence of sickness until his beard grew to a great length. He then disguised himself in the habit of a beggar, and came in that character to the house of the MacNivens late of an evening, when he was kindly treated by the women, but refused lodgings for the night. He begged hard to be allowed to remain, and when they attempted to remove him by force, he pretended to be afflicted with gravel, and uttered such piercing shrieks that they had pity on him, and allowed him to lie at the fireside, where, after a great deal of mock moaning, he pretended to fall sound asleep, and by this artifice discovered the cave; for, believing him to be really asleep, the door was opened to give the men their supper. He left the house early in the morning, and a few days thereafter he returned with a strong party, and beheaded every one of the unfortunate MacNivens upon the stump of a tree before the door. The most singular circumstance connected with this tragic affair is, that every one of the descendants of Allaster Caint to this very day has been afflicted with gravel.'

"The cave was well known to the old natives of Badenoch under the name of An Uaimh Mhoir - i.e., the Great Cave. It is now generally known in the district as The Robber's Cave, but it is evidently of a much older date than common tradition assigns to it. I am indebted to Mr David MacGibbon, architect, Edinburgh, one of the accomplished authors of 'The Castellated Architecture of Scotland', for the following particulars and for the plan of the cave given at page 407.

It is curved as shown on the plan. The side walls are built with large stones, those towards the top being pushed inwards so as to diminish the space, and the top covered in with a long stone, as shown in section. The entrance is very narrow, and has apparently sloped down from the surface to the doorway, which is composed of massive stones, the jampbs of which incline towards the top. This doorway has been defended either by a stone or wooden door strengthened by a strong sliding-bar on the inside, the holes or slots for which are still visible. The portion of the roof next the entrance has fallen in, but the greater part of the stone roof still exists.

A cave or earth-house most closely resembling the one at Raitts was found in 1869 at Crichton Mains, in Mid-Lothian, as described by Lord Rosehill in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, vol.viii. p.105, of which sketches are given by

Dr Joseph Anderson in his learned and able work on 'Scotland in Pagan Times.'

'Whatever,' says Dr Anderson, 'may have been the actual purpose or purposes to which they were applied, the fact which is of importance in our investigation is that these earth-houses, though ranging in area from Berwickshire to the north coast of Sutherland, are all of one special character, long, low, narrow galleries, always possessing a certain amount of curvature, sometimes greatly and at other times doubly curved, always widening and increasing in height from the low and narrow entrance inwards, usually built with convergent walls and roofed with heavy lintels, which are always lower than the surrounding level of the ground, so that the whole structure is subterranean. Occasionally they present variations in structure, as in the case of one at Murroes in Forfarshire, which, instead of being built, has its walls constructed entirely of flagstones set on edge. Similarly, the example at Kinord, in Aberdeenshire, has its walls constructed of single boulders set on edge or on end; and it presents the further peculiarity of the chamber being divided into two branches at the farther end. One at Pirnie, in the parish of Wemyss, in Fife, and another at Elie, had steps leading down to the entrance.'

'Like the Scottish examples, the earth-houses of Cornwall are long narrow galleries of dry-built masonry, but they are not so strongly marked by the peculiar feature of single or double curvature which distinguishes the Scottish group. They are comparatively few in number, and any indications of the period of their occupation that have been observed point also to a time not far distant from the close of the Roman occupation of the country. No other group of such underground structures is known in any other part of Europe, or indeed anywhere else in the world. These excavated chambers, possessing the characteristics which have been described, are peculiar to the Celtic area, and the specially typical form with the strongly marked curvature is found only in Scotland.'

'Of the culture and civilisation of the people who constructed these strange subterranean cells it may be impossible, in the present condition of our knowledge, to form an adequate estimate; but we can say this of them with certainty, that whatever may have been the special motives and circumstances that induced them to give this peculiar expression to their architectural efforts, they exhibit in other respects evidences of culture which, though it may be held to be inferior in range and quality to the culture of the Christian time, compares not unfavourably (so far as it goes) with that which is exhibited in connection with the superior architecture of the brochs.

'And while on all these lines of investigation we have traced the manifestations of these early forms of culture and civilisation up to points at which they seem to touch the culture and civilisation of the Roman empire, it is to be observed that they do no more than touch it - they are not merged in it. In all their distinctive features they are still Celtic, and Celtic exclusively. There is nothing Roman in the forms of the prevailing types; there is nothing Roman in the art that decorates these forms; there is nothing Roman in the typical character of the structures in which they are found. The forms, the art, and the architecture are those of Scotland's Iron Age - the Pagan period of the Celtic people.' "

MacPherson, Alexander. 'Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands in Olden Times' (Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1893), Selections from the MSS of the Late Captain MacPherson (Old Baillid), Chapter II, 407-11 and illus.