

IV.

NOTICE OF THE QUIGRICH OR CROSIER, AND OTHER RELICS OF ST
FILLAN, IN THE POSSESSION OF THEIR HEREDITARY KEEPERS,
OR DEWARS, IN GLENDOCHART, IN 1549-50. BY JOSEPH ANDER-
SON, LL.D., ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

Turning over the leaves of a volume of transcripts of charters and other documents made by the late Donald Gregory for his *History of the Highlands and Isles*, my eye lighted upon one of a series of extracts from the General Register of Decreets,¹ which reads as follows :—

Feb. 14, 1549-50.—Anent oure Souverane ladeis lettres purchest at the instance of Maleis Doir of Quickreich, Archibald Doir of Fergy and Malcolm Doir of Bernane aganis Schir Hew Curre Priour of Straphillane Tuiching the production before the Lordis of the Counsale of the ordinar lettres and lettres in the four formis past thairupon Charging the saidis complenaris to deliver and present in the Kirkis of Killin and Straphillan certane reliques and nocht

¹ Gregory's *Collections*, vol. vii.; *General Register of Decreets*, vol. viii. fol. 323.

to be tane furth agane without license of the said prioure—to be sene and considerit, and to heir and sie the samyn suspendit be ressoun that the saidis complenaris are assoilyeit fra the process of cursing contenit in the saidis ordinar lettres gif thair any be, as at mair lenth is contenit in the saidis lettres—The saidis complenaris compeirand be maister Thomas M'Calyeane thair procuratour and the said Priour being personalie present the Lordis of Counsale suspends the saidis lettres in the four formes purchest be the said priour aganis the saidis complenaris and process of horne contenit thairintil and descernis the effect thairof to ceiss in tyme cuming be ressoun that thair ar absolvit fra the saidis ordinar lettres and cursing contenit thairintil gif any be, lykas the said absolutioun schawin and produceit befor the saidis Lordis proportit and bure—and lettres to be direct hereupon in forme as effeiris.

The purport of this document is that Hugh Currie, the prior of the Priory of Strathfillan, had endeavoured to obtain a decree of the Court to compel three individuals called Dewars to deliver and present in the churches of Killin and Strathfillan certain relics in their possession, which, after having been thus delivered, should not be taken out again without the Prior's leave. But the Court disallowed the Prior's claim, and left the Dewars in the unchallenged possession of the relics.

These relics were plainly religious relics, and of sufficient reputation to make it a matter of importance for the Prior to obtain possession of them for his churches. Moreover, these relics were in the possession of laymen, not of priests or clergy, amenable to jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, or the Prior would not have been suing them in a civil court. Still further, the possession of these religious relics by these lay custodiers must have had a legal authority derived from the Civil power, or the Court would not have upheld them in that possession.

The persons thus in possession, and apparently in legal possession, of the relics are named in the document as Maleis, Doir of Quickreith; Archibald, Doir of Fergy; and Malcolm, Doir of Bernane. At first sight it seems as if these designations were those of three lairds of one family name, possessing lands named respectively Quickreith, Fergy, and Bernane; but there are no such lands or places in the district, and the explanation of the designations must be sought for in some other connection.

The name Dewar, it is now well known, was originally an official

designation, which in process of time became a family name in the same way as the names Steward, Mair, Dempster, and many others. If we go back sixty years before the date of this document, we find King James III. issuing letters under the Privy Seal confirming the possession and use of "ane relik of Sanct Fulane callit *The Quigrich* to Malise Doir," probably the father of the person here designed Malise, Doir of Quickreith. In the letters issued by King James III. it is expressly stated that "the said Malise Doire and his forbearis have had this relic called the Quigrich in their keeping (hereditarily) since the time of King Robert the Bruce and of before," and that "they have made nane answer to na person spiritual or temporal in ony thing concerning the said haly relic uthirways than is contenit in the auld infeftmentis thair of." The custody of the Quigrich of St Fillan was therefore a hereditary office held by the forefathers of this Malise Doire or Dewar from the time of King Robert Bruce and before, and confirmed to him and his descendants by King James III. in terms of the auld infeftments. What these terms were is not specified, but we get some light on them in a document again sixty years earlier, from which it appears that in 1428 there was an inquest held at Kandrochit by John Spens of Perth, baillie of Glendochard, "concerning the authority and privileges of a certain relic of Saint Felan which is commonly called *Coygerach*," when the jury found that "the bearer, or custodier of this relic, who is commonly called Jore (Doir or Dewar), ought to have annually and hereditarily from each inhabitant of the parish of Glendochart, holding a markland of land, half a boll of meal," and from others in the same proportion; and that the office of bearing (*i.e.*, the keepership) of the said relic "was given hereditarily by the successor of Saint Felan to a certain progenitor of the present keeper Finlay Jore, to which office the said Finlay is the true and legitmate heir;" and that these privileges were use and wont in the time of King Robert Bruce, and of all the kings from his time to that of the present inquest.

We thus find that, for a period of one hundred and twenty years, the ancestors of the Malise Doir or Dewar of 1549 were fully fortified by legal documents in the hereditary possession of the relic of St Fillan called the Quigrich; and from the last quoted document we also learn

that the lay custodier of this relic, who had been first appointed by the successor of St Fillan, was a progenitor of the Finlay of 1428, who was a progenitor of the Malise of 1487. But further, it is stated in general terms, that the bearer of this relic is *vulgariter* or commonly called *Jore*, from which we learn that Doire or Dewar is not the name of the family, but the name of the office of the bearer or custodier of the relic. Indeed, if we go back for a space of ninety years before the earliest of these documents, or more than two centuries before the document of 1549, we come to a missive in 1336 by Alexander Menzies, lord of Glendochart, relating to the lands of Eyich in Glendochart, and addressed to Donald M'Sobrell, *dewar Cogerach*.¹ The terms of the document are not known, but the entry of the title in a list of the Breadalbane charters, made in 1587, gives countenance to the inference that this document of 1336 may have been a confirmation of the lands of Eyich, or part of them, to the keeper of the *Cogerach*, who was called by his patronymic Donald M'Sobrell, and by his office *dewar Cogerach*. If then, within seven years after the death of King Robert Bruce, we find the Dewar Cogerach, or keeper of the Quigrich, in possession of the lands of Eyich, we find the Dewar of the Quigrich still in possession of the same lands in 1551, or more than two hundred years later;² and what is most significant, we find that part of these lands is styled *Cryetin dewar*, or the Dewar's croft. What may be the precise significance of the statement that the lands in question "have never been computed in the rental of the Lordship of Glendochart, or any payment from them made to the queen," I will not undertake to determine; but it is certainly suggestive of a survival of the effect of the old Celtic custom of mortifying lands to the saint, free of all royal and customary exactions. Shortly stated, the gist of this charter of 4th March 1551 is that Queen Mary sets in feu-ferm to Malise Dewar and his heirs male and assigns, the 40-shilling land of auld extent of Eyicht, Cryetin dewar in Auchincarne, and half of the merkland called Cragwokin in the lordship of Glendochart, which have never been computed in the rental, or any

¹ This is the oldest spelling of the word subsequently spelt Coygerach, Quegrith, Quigrich, and Quickreith.—*Proceedings*, vol. xii. p. 155.

² *Register of the Great Seal*, 1546-80, p. 151.

payment from them made to the queen, but now they are to pay 40 shillings annually, with a duplicand at the entry of heirs. Thirty years later, or in 1583, King James VI. confirmed a charter of Donald Dewar, who had sold these lands to Duncan Campbell of Glenurchy. The charter itself is dated at Ilanran, 2nd December 1575, and among the witnesses is Jo. Dewar in Suy. In another charter of the same date, the same Donald Dewar appears under the Gaelic form of his name, which is Donald Macindeora vic Cogerach. The Gaelic form always has the article prefixed. It is Macindewar—son of *the* Dewar—instead of the customary patromymic.

But now to return to the document of 1549. Since Dewar is the ancient official title of the keeper of a relic of a Celtic saint, it follows that we are here to designate the three persons charged to deliver up the relics in their possession as Malise, the Dewar of the Quigrich or Crosier; Archibald, the Dewar of the Ferg; and Malcolm, the Dewar of the Bernane;—the two latter, like the former, being sacred relics, and presumably relics of St Fillan. That this was really so, may be further inferred from a fact, which we learn from another source, viz., that the Ferg and the Bernane, whatever they may have been, had crofts of land attached to their keepership like the Quigrich. In 1640 Robert Campbell of Glenurchy is returned heir of his deceased brother in, among other lands, the following:¹—“3 croftis terrarum subscriptis viz. Deweris croft in Suy nuncupata *Dewar Vernon's* croft, crofta in Auchlyne nuncupata *Dewar-na-ferg's* croft, et crofta in Killin vocata *Dewar-namans* croft.” From this we also learn that the Dewar's croft in Suy was the croft of the Dewar of the Bernane, that the Dewar of the Ferg or Farg had his croft at Auchlyne, and that there was another Dewar and another croft of which we have not previously heard, viz., the Dewar of the *Man* or *Mayne*,² whose croft was at Killin.

And there was still another Dewar in Glendochart, of whom we have an incidental notice in the record of a court held at Kandrochit by the bailie of Glendochart in 1468, when Margaret Striveling, lady of Glenurchy, demanded from John M'Molcalum M'Gregor the rent of the lands

¹ *Index of Retours*, Perth, Oct. 27, 1640, No. 494.

² *Ibid.*, Mar. 25, 1670, No. 806.

of Coreheyman, to which demand the said John answered in open court that he did not hold the tack of these lands from the Lady of Glenurchy, but that he held it from the *Deore de Meser*, and that he was not liable for any by-gone rents, because he had paid them to the said *Deore*, from whom he held the said lands.¹

Thus, putting together the several indications gathered from these documents, we find that before the Reformation there were in Glendochart no fewer than five different relics of St Fillan, and that in the case of each separate relic the authority and influence of the Church had been unable to prevail against the old Celtic usage which had up to that time preserved the lay succession of hereditary Dewars, and which in the case of the Quigrich succeeded in preserving it, not only till the Reformation, but down to the time when the Society of Antiquaries succeeded to the keepership of that relic.

The five relics of St Fillan which we thus find in the possession of their hereditary Dewars, each with a croft of land held by the tenure of the keepership, were as follows:—

1. The *Quigrich* or Crosier in the keeping of the Dewar of the Quigrich or Coygerach, who had the lands of Cryetindewar (Dewar's croft) in Eyich.

2. The Bernane, in the keeping of the Dewar Bhernane (pronounced and written by the lowland scribe as Vernon), who had the lands of *Dewar Vernon's* croft in Suy.

3. The *Ferg* (or *Farg*, or *Farichd*), in the keeping of the Dewar-na-Ferg, who had Dewar-na-ferg's croft in Auchlyne. The chapel at Auchlyne seems to have had its name from this relic, as it was known in the last century as *Caipal-na-farichd*.²

4. The *Man*, or *Mayne*, in the keeping of the *Dewar-na-mayne*, who had *Dewar-na-maynes* croft, at Killin.

5. The *Meser*, in the keeping of the *Deore de Meser*, who had lands, including Coreheyman, which he sublet as before noticed.

The next question that arises is, how far these relics are now capable of being identified.

¹ *Black Book of Taymouth* (Bannatyne Club), Preface, p. xxxvi.

² *The Bruce*, by John Barbour, Jamieson's Edition, Note, p. 484.

The Quigrich, as we know, is the ornamental head of the Crosier, now in the National Museum, and the history of which has been so fully told by Sir Daniel Wilson and the late Dr John Stuart.¹

The Bernane, I think, may be identified as another relic of St Fillan, also now fortunately in the possession of the Society. There is nothing in the document of 1549 to give any clue to its identity, but it is plain from the terms of that document, the only one that mentions it, that it was then a well-known relic of St Fillan. But we may be guided to its identification by the analogy of the name. Bernane is not an unknown term in connection with the relics of Celtic saints. In the tripartite Life of St Patrick, the Bearnan Brigde, or Bell of St Brigit, is mentioned as being in St Patrick's possession. The Barnaan Cuilawn, an enshrined Bell of St Culan, still exists. The Barnan Evin is mentioned by Colgan as the name of the Bell of St Evin, and the Bearnan Ciaran and the Bearnan Ailbe, are the names by which the Bells of Ciaran and Ailbe are recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*. The precise meaning of the word Barnaan, like that of the word Quigrich, is matter of speculation, but these instances show that it was not an unusual epithet applied to the bell of a Celtic saint. I therefore conclude that the Bernane in possession of the Dewar Bhernane in Glendochart, before the Reformation, was the Bell of St Fillan now in the National Museum. Its history subsequent to the Reformation, apparently includes the failure of the line of its hereditary Dewars, and so we find it in the middle of the eighteenth century, with a reputation for working miraculous cures, still protected by its sanctity, though left exposed upon a tombstone in the churchyard of the disused church of the monastery. It is not known that it possessed a shrine or ornamented case or covering, like so many of the Celtic bells; but it must have had some special importance, when in 1488 it was borne in the pageant of the coronation of King James IV. at Scone.

The Ferg is quite unknown to me, and I am not prepared to hazard even a guess at its identity. I have not met with any similar word in connection with any relic of a Celtic saint. Jamieson states that the chapel at Auchlyne was called *Caipal-na-Farichd*, or the Chapel of the

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xii. pp. 122, 134.

Farige or Ferg,¹ and he makes out that this was the crosier, but there is no evidence to support such a view. It is quite evident that the Quigrich and the Ferg were two different things, in possession of two different Dewars, each holding a different croft in virtue of his office.

The Mayne, according to the analogy of the word, ought to mean the hand, and we can readily conceive the application of this name to a very interesting and highly venerated relic of St Fillan, viz., the miraculous left hand which he was wont to hold up when writing in the dark, as the servant, who looked through the chink of the door, saw that the left hand afforded a clear and steady light to the right hand.² The hand or arm (generally the forearm with the hand) is not an uncommon relic of a saint, and was usually enshrined in a silver case, made in the form of an arm and hand, with provision for its being opened when it was desired to expose the relic to view, or closed when it was not necessary so to expose it. Well-known instances of Celtic reliquaries of this kind are the shrines of St Lachtan's Arm and St Patrick's Hand.³ In all probability, the arm of St Fillan was enshrined, at least as early as the crosier or the bell; that it was preserved in a case or shrine in the early part of the fourteenth century, we learn from Boece's account of the miracle which took place in the tent of King Robert the Bruce on the night before the Battle of Bannockburn.²

There can be no doubt that the relic of St Fillan which was at Bannockburn was neither the crosier nor the bell, but the Mayne or enshrined arm and hand which used to give the miraculous light. The Mayne seems to have been kept at Killin, and from its nature would be one of the first relics to be destroyed after the Reformation.

¹ Caipal-na-Farichd, or Farige, at Auchlyne, is a small rectangular building 25 feet in length by 15 feet in breadth, the walls now standing about 8 feet high on the outside, but the inside considerably filled up with rubbish. The door is nearly in the middle of the north wall, and there are remains of two windows in the south wall, and one in the middle of the east and west ends respectively. "Caipals" are often mere burying-places. There is one at Inchbuie at Dochart Bridge, one at Finlarig, and one at Borland. The "Caipal," in the burying-ground at Suie, is the burying-place of a family of M'Nabs.

² *Aberdeen Breviary*; Forbes's *Kalendars of Scottish Saints*.

³ *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. vi.; *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. ii. p. 207.

The Meser is not known except from the single notice of its Dewar in 1468. I have not met with the word in connection with any relics of Celtic saints. But there may be some analogy in the *Misach* of Columcille, a famous relic of the saint, which had its hereditary keepers and its four gortes of land for the keepership in the parish of Clonmany, Inishowen. It still exists, and is the shrine or *cumdach*, or ornamental case of a MS., probably a Psalter, assigned to St Columba. The *Miosach* of Cairnech is also mentioned as one of the three principal *vexilla* or battle-reliquaries of ancient Erin. It may be that the Meser of St Fillan was regarded as the very manuscript he wrote by the light which streamed from the miracle-working *mayne*.