

Mermaids and Muggles

Anne Campbell Collection, Argyll Papers, Inveraray Castle

AC/01/01

[4 pages - dimensions: 188mm x 307mm, handwritten]

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At Campbeltown the twenty ninth day of October Eighteen hundred and eleven years. In presence of Duncan Campbell Esq. sheriff substitute of Kintyre, Appeared John Mclsaac, son to Lachlan Mclsaac tenant in Corphine, aged twenty three years, who being solemnly sworn and examined, Depones, That he resides in the said farm of Corphine, which is situated on the east coast of Kintyre, about four miles south from Campbeltown. That about three or four o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday the thirteenth current having taken a walk towards the sea side, he came to the edge of a precipice above the shore, from which he saw the appearance of something white upon a black rock at some distance from him. Depones, That having approached nearer to this rock, he observed this white object movng, which excited his curiosity so much that he resolved to get as near to it as possible unperceived. That in order to accomplish this purpose, he crept upon all fours through a field of corn till he got among the rocks near to the white object above mentioned, and then from rock to rock, until he came within twelve or fifteen paces of the rock on which it lay. That upon looking at this object with attention, he was impressed with great surprise and astonishment at its uncommon appearance. That it lay upon the rock seemingly upon its belly, with its head towards the sea. That the upper half of it was white, and of the shape of a human body, and the other half towards the tail, of a brindled or reddish grey colour apparently covered with scales; but the extremity of the tail itself was of greenish-red shining Colour. Depones, that the head of this animal was covered with long hair, and as the wind blew off the land, it sometimes raised the hair over this creatures head, & every time the gust of wind would do this, the animal would lean towards one side, and taking up the opposite hand, would stroke the hair backwards, & then leaning upon the other side, would adjust the hair

upon the opposite side of its head in the same manner. That at the same time the animal would

[signed] Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

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would put back the hair on both sides of its head in this manner, it would also spread or extend its tail like a fan to a considerable breadth, and while so extended, the tail continued in a tremulous motion and when drawn together again it remained motionless and appeared to the Deponent to be about twelve or fourteen inches broad, lying flat upon the rock. Depones, That the hair which was long, & light brown in the Colour, attracted his particular notice, That the animal upon the whole was between four and five feet long, as near as he could judge. That it had a head, hair, arms, and body down to the middle, like a human being, only that the arms were short in proportion to the body, which appeared to be about the thickness of that of a young lad, and tapering gradually to the point of the tail. That at the time it was stroaking its head as above mentioned, the fingers were kept closs together, so that he cannot say whether they were web'd or not. That he continued concealed looking at this animal for near two hours, the part of the rock upon which it lay being dry all that time. That after the Sea had so far retired as to leave the rock dry to the height of five feet above the surface of the water, the animal leaning first upon one hand or arm & then upon the other, drew its body forwards to the edge of the rock, and then tumbled clumsily into the sea. That the Deponent immediately got upon his feet from the place of his Concealment, and about a minute thereafter he observed the animal appearing above water very near to the said rock, and then, for the first time he saw its face, every feature of which he could distinctly mark, and which to him had all the appearance of the face of a human being, with very hollow eyes. And being particularly interrogated Depones That the Cheecks were of the same colour with the rest of its face – That the neck seemed to be short, and the animal was constantly with both hands

[signed] Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

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hands stroaking and washing its breast, which was half immersed in the water, and of which of Course he had but an imperfect view. That for this reason he cannot say whether its bosom was formed like a woman or not. Depones That he saw no other fins or feet upon the said animal but as above described. Depones, That this animal Continued above water as aforesaid for a few minutes and then disappeared, and was seen no more by the Deponent. That one of his reasons for lying so long concealed as above described, was from the expectation that the ebb tide would leave the rock and that part of the Shore dry before the animal would move from it, and that he would then be able to secure it. Depones that he has been informed that some boys in the neighbouring Farm of Ballinattunie saw a creature of the above apperance in the Sea closs to the shore on the afternoon of the same Sunday. All which he depones to be truth as he shall answer to God, and depones he cannot write.

[signed] Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

Turn over

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Campbeltown 29th October 1811

We, the Rev'd Doctor George Robertson and Mr Norman McLeod Ministers of Campbeltown, and James Maxwell Esquire Chamberlain of Mull, Do hereby Certify that we were present when the above named John McIsaac delivered his Testimony as before mentioned. That we know of no reason why his veracity should be called in question, and that from the manner in which he delivered his evidence, we are satisfied that he was impressed with a perfect belief that the appearance of the animal he has described was such as he has represented it to be.

[signed] Geo. Robertson

Nor'n MacLeod

Ja' Maxwell JP

[written across] Mermaid 1811

AC/01/03

[8 pages - dimensions: 134mm x 210mm, handwritten on headed notepaper. A later copy of contemporary evidence]

[page 1]

Kilbride Manse

Lamlash

Arran

At Campbeltown the
second day of November 1811

In presence of Duncan
Campbell Esq'r. Sheriff
Substitute of the District
of Kintyre, Compeared
Catherine Loynachan
daughter to Lachlan
Loynachan herd in
Ballinatunie, aged
eight years and a half
who being examined
and interrogated Declares
that on the afternoon
of a Sunday about
three weeks ago, she was
herding cattle for her
father at the seaside
on the said farm and

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had a brother with her
younger than herself.
That as she was turning
the cattle towards home,
and being at the time
very close to the sea side
she observed some creat-
ure sliding upon its belly
off one of the rocks very
near her into the sea.
That she observed this
creature had a head
covered with long hair
of a darkish colour, the
shoulders & back white

with the rest of the body tapering like a fish, and as she thought of a darkish brown colour. That after sliding from the rock it disappeared under water, but immediately thereafter

Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

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it came above water again about six yards further out & turned about with the face of it towards the shore where the declarant was standing, and having laid one hand which was like a boy's hand upon another rock that was near the first rock, it came in nearer to the shore than it was. That at this time the Declarant saw the face of it distinctly which had all the appearance of the face of a child, and as white. That this time the animal was constantly rubbing or washing its breast, with one hand, the fingers being

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close together. Declares that after this animal continued to look towards the Declarant for about half a minute, it swam about & disappeared, but in a very short time, thereafter, she saw the head & face of this animal

appearing above water
again, and swimming
away south towards
the farm of Corphine
but soon after disappear-
ed and the Declarant
saw it no more. Declares
that from the appear-
ance of this animal
above water when
swimming south
she thought it was
a boy that had fallen
out of a vessel passing

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Kilbride Manse
Lamlash
Arran

bye & was swimming
in shore for his life, upon
which she went home
in a hurry & told her
Mother what she saw
at the shore as afore-
said, all which she
Declares to be truth
& that she cannot write

Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

Compeared Lachlan
Loynachan herd in
Ballinatunie, Father
to the preceding De-
clarent, who being
particularly examin-
ed & interrogated

Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.

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Declares that upon
Sunday the thirteenth
day of October last, as he

was going from his house before sunset to look after some of the cattle of the farm, the day being stormy, his wife called him back and informed him that their daughter Catherine came from the shore, and saying that there was a boy swimming along shore and desired the Declarant to see what it was. Declares that he, his wife & his daughter Catherine went down to the sea side where she said the boy was

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swimming but no boy or person was to be seen there. Declares that his daughter then told him all that she has now declared about the appearance of the boy and pointed out to him the two Rocks where she had seen the person they were in quest of. Declares that he is well acquainted with the fishing rock called the black rock of Corphine, and he thinks that the distance between that rock and the the two rocks where his said daughter saw the boy or animal before mentioned will be

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about half a mile or
rather better, all which
he Declares to be true &
that he cannot write.

Dun. Campbell Sh. Sub.