

Inverness Stone

Clach-neart Mheirichard

Referred to in contemporary press as weighing *18 stone*

114kg/252lb

Editor – Peter did not have an article for this stone. What follows below is pieced together from a series of emails starting in 2014.



Clach-neirt Mheirichard ?

A stone lifting challenge has recently been introduced in to the Inverness Highland Games. This challenge involves loading a round stone over a fixed bar set at 5 feet and is often known as the *stonemason's challenge* in reference to an historic event at the Northern Games.

On the 15th September 1816 there was a lift-and-carry event involving a stone at one of the earliest organised Highland Games. This event was arranged by Alexander Ranaldson MacDonell of Glengarry.

The LIFTING OF THE STONE was next resorted to, and was practiced by the strong (in part) during the interval of the runners' absence; in this; Serjeant Ranald MacDonell, "Na Craig", from Glengarry, maintained his original superiority with great ease; next Allan Macdonell , from Glenlee , carried it 42 yards; Donald MacDonell, from Lundy,30 yards; John Macmaster, from Dockinassy, 28 yards and a half; John Chisholm, from Glenmorrison; 26 yards; Donald Cameron, from Dockinassy, 20 yards - several others tried it, in vain, or declined having their names inserted, from the little hand they made of it, and the well authenticated efforts of John More MacDonell, late of Montcraggie, in Glengarry, and of James MacDonell, "Mac Fear Balemhian", from Abertarff with this very stone, were listened to with pleasure by all and astonishment by many.

Sporting Anecdotes, p.136-7, 1820

This was followed by the more well-known event September 21st, 1822 at another Northern Meeting run by Glengarry.

At lifting the stone – Allan Macdonell, first, as putting over the bar at No.9; Hugh Fraser, second, by doing it with ease at No.8; Ewan Macdonald, from Uist , at No. 7.

The Sporting Magazine, p.41, Volume 9, 1822

It is worth noting that the original stone lifting competition was a *rising bar* or *stone for height* competition, rather than a fixed-height.

There is persistent myth that the winner was an unknown stonemason. This may have stemmed from vague reporting in contemporary reports. For example, the Inverness Courier 10th October, 1822 refers to the winner as a *mere stone-mason*. The same report indicates that the bar height was *more than five feet from the ground*.

There is no doubt that the winner was a stonemason named Allan Macdonell.

Editor: Peter was pursuing the idea that the same stone had been used at both the events (1816 and 1822) organised by Glengarry and that the original stone may be located within the grounds of Glengarry Hotel by the shores of Loch Oich. These grounds include the ruined Invergarry Castle, which was once a seat of the Chiefs of the MacDonells of Glengarry.

He did mention his intention to speak to the owners of the Hotel but I heard no more about it. I subsequently saw a document by Peter in 2014 which had the stone pictured at the start of this section with a question mark beside it.

Unfortunately, I did not ask for more information at the time and do not know what let Peter to believe that this stone may be the original stone used in the Northern Meetings in 1816 and/or 1822.