

## **The Lifting Stones of “Rudh-a-fuder” – Historical Proof**

### 1. SOURCE

*“His full name was Alexander son of George, son of Alexander, son of Alexander, son of Henry; the pedigree, after the Celtic fashion, being thus run up to the coroner’s son Henry. He went to school at Bower. His manhood was notorious for height, strength and courage. The strongest man in Lord Reay’s country, Thomas an Elenan, was beaten by him on Thurso sand at tug of war with a walking stick, and his deeds with wild cattle at markets were also famous. How he an Ingram Gunn carried a large Morayshire Tombstone in Dirlot Churchyard, erected to Alexander Gunn, farmer, Dalganachan, is a traditional feat; and another was his ease of dealing with the lifting stones of Rudh-a-fuder, Loch More.”*

From page 107 of “The Gunns” by Thomas Sinclair (1890)

#### Notes –

“tug of war with a walking stick” – known as maide leasg (lazy stick).

“deeds with wild cattle” – either “dorn fhuar” (cold fist) or perhaps fighting with bulls?

“carried a large Morayshire Tombstone” – common feat of strength which was replicated in adjoining Sutherland, Lochaber and in Skye.

### 2. NOMENCLATURE –

“Rudh a fuder” does not appear to be correct as “fuder” is undefined in Gaelic dictionaries.

Rudh is defined and is definitive of the type of place where the lifting stones existed – ie in proximity to peat stack.

Rudh – Rue, a plant (McLeod Dictionary), Rugh – small stack of peats (Sutherland)

Rudh – small stack of peats (Am Faclair Beag)

It is unusual for a peat stack to be afforded a specific name hence making the location extremely local with its location defined exactly by the word “fuder”. Unfortunately there is no such word and hence the Gaelic within the text appears to have been corrupted from some other term. The closest in language would be “fudar” meaning “powder” but the subsequent “powdered peat stack” does not appear in anyway correct.

Fuder – Unknown. Perhaps

Fudar – powder (Am Faclair Beag)

Another and more likely word that fuder may be corrupted from is possibly “Fadadh”.

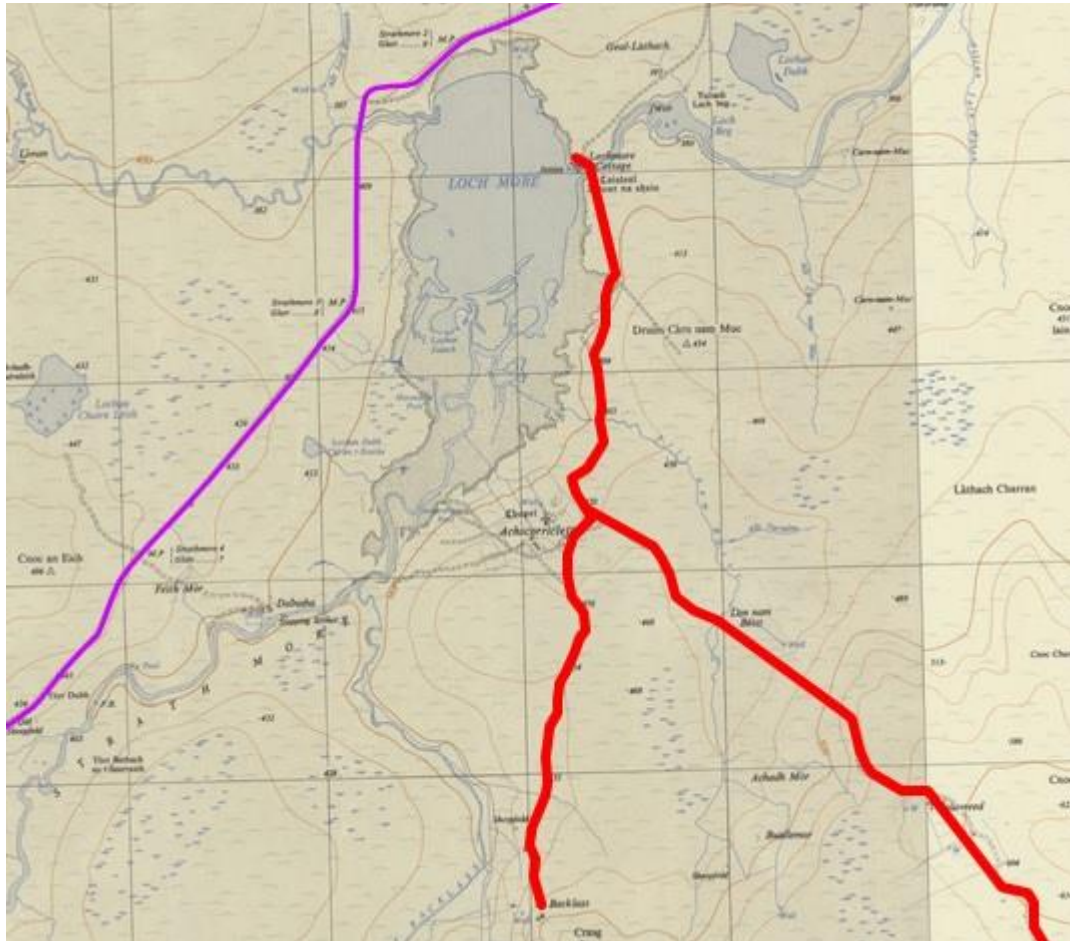
Fadadh – Fireplace or Kiln (Am Faclair Beag)

Supporting this is that the “Scots” language specifically relating to Caithness refers to the bottom of a corn kiln as a “fuddy” – Jamieson’s Dictionary

***Therefor the best translation of “Rudh a fuder” may well be Peat stack of the Corn Kiln.***

### **3. LOCATION**

Suffice to say, Rudh a fuder is not marked on the current or any prior OS map perhaps indicative of its non- static position. As the majority of known lifting stones, for whatever reason, exist on or adjacent to an established track or road (coffin roads/drovers etc), the following map details the known ancient tracks/paths in the vicinity of Loch More.



The ancient communities that resided pre clearances in this part of Caithness were situated south of Loch More. The following website provides some detailed information of the paths marked red but addresses the route as continuous with the termination point being the three extremities. (See <http://www.heritagepaths.co.uk/pathdetails.php?path=290> )

The obviousness of the marked paths is that there 3 distinct branches which join at the township of Ashcorriclett.

From the OS names book for Caithness we have the following for Ashcorriclett –

List of names as written	Various modes of spelling	Authorities for spelling	Situation	Description remarks	Note
ACHSCORACLATE	Achscoriclett Achscoraclate Achscoraclete Achscorriclett	Marwood Sutherland William Gunn Achscoriclett A Sinclair Achscoriclett Estate Plan of Strathmore 1862 Johnstone Map of Caithness Val. [Valuation] Roll 1871-72	027	Two Small Farm Steadings in close proximity to each other Situated some little distance south of Loch Mor. Proprietor Sir J.G.T. Sinclair	
ACHSCORRICLETT [1895]			027		
CHAPEL (Site of) [Achscoraclate]		Marwood Sutherland William Gunn Achscoriclett A Sinclair Achscoriclett	027	This name applies to the remains consisting of a heap of stones of a Catholic Chapel, Situated at the corner of a field, at Achscoriclett The font for the holy water is still to be seen among the other stones at this place. Human remains have also been interred here, but not within this last 60 years. Beyond this I can learn nothing about it.	

The Catholic Chapel referred to was known as St Bridgets and there is evidence to suggest that as the graveyard had been last used some 60 years prior to the date of the entry making the last internment circa late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Centred as it is at the junction of 3 tracks, these would have been established “coffin roads” serving the local communities, particularly those to the south of Loch More although the tracks would have also been used for more general purposes. It is clear however in that communities existed in this area, the centre of the community was the churchyard at Achscoriclett.

About one third of extant lifting stones exist close to an ancient Church or Graveyard with 2 known to exist entirely within. Those stones that exist within the actual churchyard are defined by age through being pre-reformation and if of a later vintage, Presbyterianism would not have allowed strength practices within its confines. The ancient church at Achscoriclett was not subject to the reformation and hence if the lifting stones existed in this area, the churchyard would be the most obvious place for them to exist.

From the Heritage Paths website we have the following –

“The track now passes the former township of Achscoriclate and the supposed remains of St Bridget’s Chapel. A well-preserved corn drying kiln can be seen at the end of one of the house ruins.”

Aschscoriclate then certainly appears to be the best possible location for the stones of “rudh a fuder”. It has the correct location being at a Church and adjacent to known tracks or coffin roads and indeed its nomenclature, by the existence of a corn kiln, would appear to support this.

#### **4. ARCHAEOLOGY**

The location of St Bridget’s Chapel has been visited by the RCAHMS who from their website note the following –

##### *Archaeological Notes*

**ND04SE 6 0814 4428 and 0810 4434**

*(ND 0814 4428) St Bridget's Chapel (NR) (rems of)*

*(ND 0810 4434) Well (NR)*

*OS 6" map, (1962)*

*A structureless heap of stones is said to be the ruins of of the Chapel of St Bridget. It is situated about 100 yds NE of Achscoraclate. A short distance NNW of the ruins is a so-called holy well, still in use.*

*RCAHMS 1911, visited 1910.*

*At this site is a large mound of earth and stones, some 0.7m high, on top of which are a number of large stones set on edge. The stones appear to outline a rectangular structure with a rounded W end, measuring 10.6m E-W by 7.5m transversely. Within this setting is a mutilated area with several large stones scattered about. The well is about 80m NNW of this; it is still in use.*

*Visited by OS (WDJ), 15 April 1961.*

*The supposed remains of St Bridget's Chapel are as described by the previous field investigator. The structure surmounting the mound cannot be identified as a chapel; **those stones which are exposed and in situ are not typical of such a structure being in most cases set on edge, neither do they conform to any known, recognisable pattern.** No historical evidence is obtainable in local libraries; the nearby croft of Achscoriclate is deserted and no one could be found in the locality with a knowledge of the area.*

*The well is as described, and usable.*

*Revised at 1:10560.*

*Visited by OS (NKB), 28 April 1982.*

What is clear from the last visit to the site in 1982 is that a number of stones, those defined as “set on edge” do not belong to the structure of an ancient Chapel.



The photograph above reveals the possibility of the stones being at this location with at least two stones identifiable on it which can be deemed “set on edge”, both of which certainly appear to be good lifting stones.