

Witchcraft in Kenmore

1730-57:

*EXTRACTS FROM THE KIRK SESSION
RECORDS OF THE PARISH,*

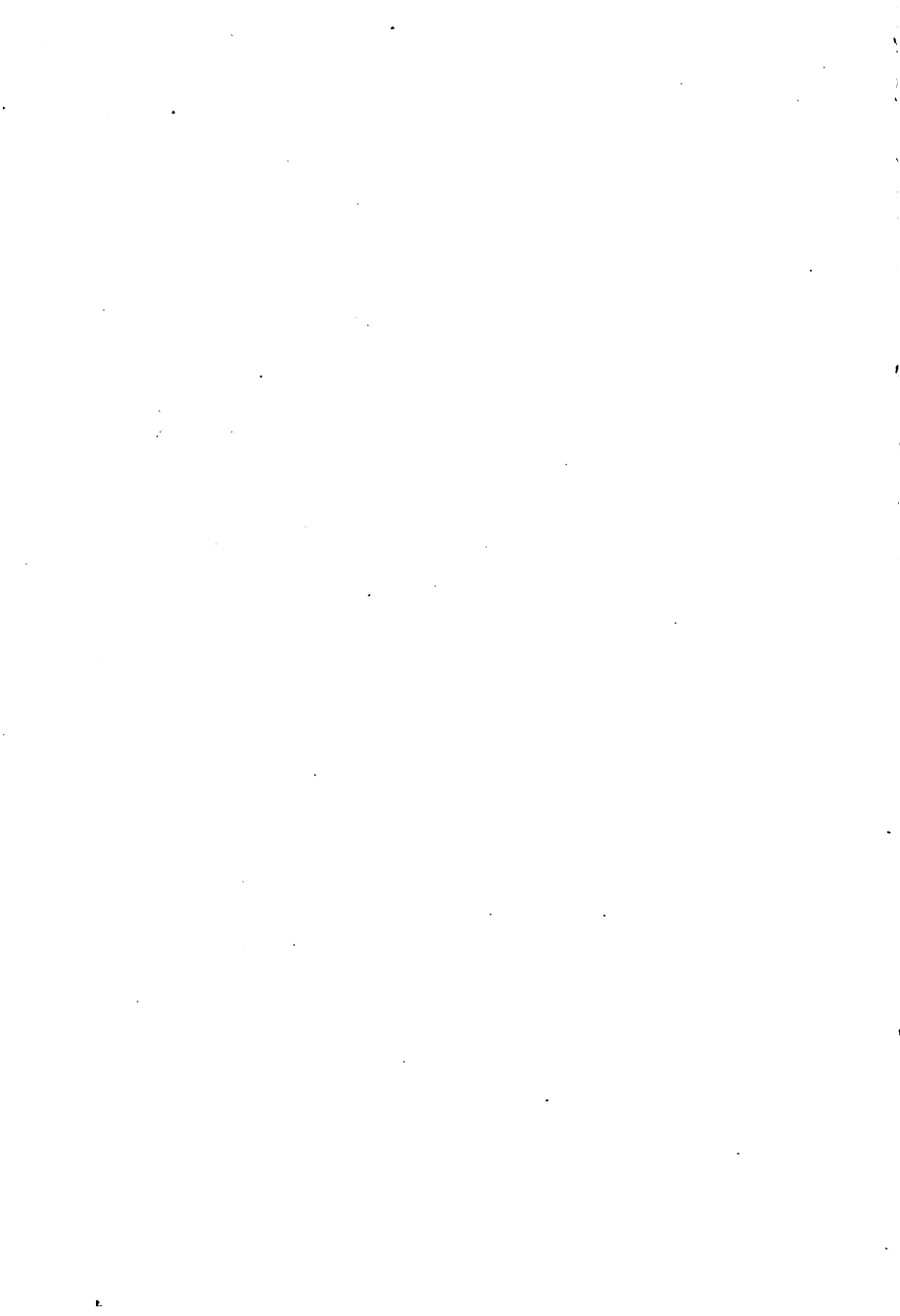
COMPILED BY

JOHN CHRISTIE,
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I.

Kenmure, January 4, 1730.

Comp: Elespeth N'lgorrive, and complained of being accused of witchcraft by John M'intyre, Taylor in port, and Mary N'Arthure his wife, before Christian Waker and her son Alexr. Waker in port.

Kenmure, January 11, 1730.

Upon sumds. compeared Elespeth N'lgorrive forsd and John M'intyre. The Session passed them both this time with a Sessional rebuke, with certification, &c.

II.

Lawrs, Aug: 23 [1730].

The Session appoints Margaret N'Grgor, Widow in Tomb, to be sumd. to yr next dyet at Kenmure.

Kenmure, Aug: 30, 1730.

Margaret M'Grigar forsd called, compeared and denyed she slandered John Lumsdan as guilty of ye death of her children by witchcraft.

III.

Kenmore, June 11th, 1747.

Margaret Robertson in Rumuckie compeared before the Session complaining that she was very unjustly charged with witchcraft and enchantments, and particularly that Archibald Cameron, and his wife Margaret M'Donald, in Rumuckie, did charge her with these diabolical arts, and therefore craved that the Session should enquire into this scandal by which her character suffers so much in the eyes of her neighbours. The Session appoints the said Archibald Cameron and his wife to be summon'd against the first Lord's Day.

Kenmore, June 14th, 1747.

Compeared the said Margaret Robertson insisting in her former complaints against the said Archibald Cameron and his wife Margaret M'Donald, and the said Archibald Cameron and his wife being call'd compeared, and being interogat as to Margaret Robertson's charge against them, they acknowledged that they heard the said Margaret Robertson accused of and charged with witchcraft, and praying curses and imprecations upon themselves or any that would come to Patrick Tosach's possessions, and particularly that John Ferguson and his wife Janet Clerich, Rumuckie, said so to them, and the said John Ferguson and his wife being present, she, the wife, acknowledged that she told as above to Archibald and his wife, and declares that she heard Margaret Robertson frequently praying curses and imprecations upon Archibald Cameron, or any other that would come to Patrick Tosach's place, particularly that ill meeting and ill fitting might he have and ill might he thrive, and that she often rebuk'd her for her curses, and she further declares that early on the Munday morning before the neighbours were up that Archibald Cameron came down the loch with his effects to take possession of Tosach's place, she saw Margaret Robertson go to the loch side with her rock and spindle, and she saw her either tying or untying the threed at her spindle

about the busses, and added what could she be doing there with her rock spindle and threed if she was not about some bad designs. The said Margaret Robertson owns she went early in the morning that day to the loch side to gather some sticks to make ready some meat to a step-son of hers who was going early from home, and that accordingly she did gather some sticks and brought them home, but refuses yt she was upon any bad designs, or that ever she imprecated any curses to Archibald Cameron or any other. Janet Clerich being asked if any other heard Margaret Robertson praying curses as above, she answered that no doubt a great many might and did hear her, as she was often guilty of it; and John Ferguson being present declares that one day she, the said Margaret, was cutting kail in Patrick Tosach's garden, he being at some distance heard her say distinctly, "she would not conceal from any that she prayed the curs of God upon any that was the occasion of Patrick Tosach's removal from his place," but says there was nobody present with him when he heard her say so, but thinks that Patrick Tosach's wife was with her at the time. The said Janet Clerich being again asked if any other heard Margaret Robertson cursing Archibald Cameron, she answered that Janet Walker about Acharn told her that she was present in Patrick Tosach's garden the time condescended upon by John Ferguson, and that she then heard her pray curses as John Ferguson had declared, and Janet Clerich further declares that she sent, at least desired, Katrine M'Lauchlan to go to the said Margaret Robertson, and to tell her to forbear her curses, but does not remember of any being present when she heard Margaret Robertson utter the said curses but small children. Margaret Robertson denies the charge laid against her by John Ferguson, but owns she was in the said garden with Patrick Tosach's wife and the said Janet Walker. She further refuses that the sd Katrine M'Lauchlan came to her with any such message. The Session appoints the said Janet Walker and Kathrin M'Lauchlan to be summond against this day eight days, and delays this affair till that day.

Kenmore, June 21, 1747.

Compeard the said Margaret Robertson and John Ferguson and his wife. The said Katrine M'Lachlane being summond and called compeared, and being interrogat whether or not the said Janet Clerich sent her with such a message to the said Margaret Robertson owned that she was, but did not deliver the message, and she further declares that, when in company with the said Janet Clerich and Janet Walker, she heard the said Margaret Robertson say that she would not conceal from any she wisht all curses upon the first that would undermine Patrick Tosach to take his possession.

The said Janet Walker was not in the country, and therefore was not summond. She is ordered to be cited against this day eight days. The Session delays this affair till said day.

Kenmore, June 28th, 1747.

The said (Janet Walker) being call'd but compeard not. The Session orders the officer to summond her against this day eight days ; he says she was not in the country when he went to her house last week.

Kenmore, July 5th, 1747.

The said Janet Walker, being summond and call'd, compeard, and being interrogat whether or not she ever heard the said Margaret Robertson praying curses upon Archibald Cameron, or any other that would come to Patrick Tosach's possession, declares that she heard her, the said Margaret Robertson, upon a certain Lord's Day, when in company with ye s'd Katrine M'Laughlan and Janet Clerich at her the said Janet Walker's house, praying the curse of God and her curse upon the first that would undermine Patrick Tosach ; and she further declares that afterwards, when in company with the said Margaret Robertson and Ann Douglas, Patrick Tosach's wife, in Patrick Tosach's garden, she heard her, the said Margaret Robertson, pray to God that the first that would undermine Patrick Tosach or that would be the occasion of

his removal should dround by the sea or water ; she declares she was in the garden all the time that Margaret Robertson was in it, but does (*not*) remember that the said Margaret said at that time that she would not conceal from any that she prayed the curse of God, &c., but remembers that she said these words the first day. The Session having read over all the declarations relative to this affair, and having asked the said Margaret Robertson what she had to say for herself, she refuses the charge as laid in the said declarations, but acknowledges that she had said when in wrath, the devil take them in the air that were the first instruments of Patrick Tosach's removals. The Session after considering the above declarations, and the said Margaret Robertson's own confession, unanimously find her guilty of praying curses and imprecations, and therefore appoint her to stand three several Lord's Days before the congregation, and there to be rebuk'd for her sin and scandal, reserving her further prosecution to their after consideration, but do not find her guilty of witchcraft, and therefore they appoint the said Janet Clerich, who accus'd Margaret Robertson of witchcraft, to be rebuk'd before the Session for rising and spreading such a scandal, and the rebuke to be publicly intimated to the congregation on the Lord's Day ; thereafter the said Margaret Robertson being call'd, and the above sentence relative to her was intimated to her, and she ordered to stand before the congregation first Lord's Day—the said Janet Clerich not being present, the Beedal is ordered to summond her the next Lord's Day.

IV.

Kenmore, July 19th, 1747.

Janet M'Intaggart, daughter to Gilbert M'Intaggart in Wester Aucharn, who was charged with using some charms and enchantments against Alexander Fisher in Wester Aucharn,

being summond and called compear'd, and being interrogate as to the above charge, acknowledges that last summer, observing as she says that the substance of their milk was taken away, she was advised by Isabel Fletcher, late servant to Alexander ffisher, and presently with John Walker in Bailnatibbert, to milk three drops from their neighbour's sheep as a charm to recover the substance of the milk, and that this she did, and from that time she found the substance of their milk return. Margaret M'Intaggart, daughter to the said Gilbert M'Intaggart, who is above ffifteen years of age, and was charged with the like practises, being summond and calld compear'd, and being interrogat whether or not she went in upon the fifth day of this present moneth, being the Lord's Day, to Alexander Fisher his house, having ane egg shell with a little milk in it, she acknowledges she did upon the very said day go into the said Alexander ffisher's house with ane egg shell, with some milk in it, concealed in her breast, and further that she went to all houses in the town in the said manner, and being asked for what end she did it, she answers she heard some of the wives of the town say that to go into their neighbour's houses with an egg shell after this manner was ane effectual charm to recover the substance of their milk which was taken away, that therefore she did it, and that Janet Campbell, Patrick M'Intaggart's wife, said in her father's house that it was a charm for that purpose, and she further says that Margaret Crerar the other neighbour wife came into their house and said she heard of such a charm being used wisht they would try to recover the substance of the milk taken away; both the girls declare that their parents knew nothing of the charms they were using.

Kenmore, August 23, 1747.

The Session entring on the M'Intaggart's affair, and both Janet M'Intaggart and Margaret M'Intaggart being present, the said Isabel Fletcher being calld compear'd, and being interrogate whether or not she advised the said Janet

M'Intaggart to milk her neighbour's ewes as she alleged, she the said Isabel refuses that she advised her, but acknowledges that upon a day when Janet M'Intaggart was telling that the substance of their milk was taken away, she said that she heard if one would milk any person's cattle whom they suspected to have taken away their milk it would recover it, but says that she did not advise Janet M'Intaggart to use that charm.

The Session could not proceed any further, because Janet Campbell and Margaret Crerar were not present—the Beddal is ordered to summond them against this day eight days. Both the M'Intaggarts were summond *apud acta* to compear the said day.

Kenmore, August 30th, 1747.

The Session entring on the M'Intaggart's affair, both Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts they being present, the said Margaret Crerar being calld compeard, and being interrogate whether or not she said to Margaret M'Intaggart as above related, she acknowledges that she told her she heard it said that if one went with a little milk in an egg shell into the person's house where they suspected the milk was, the milk in the shell would earn and the substance in the milk would return, that for her pairt she did not know whether there was good or ill in it, but refuses that she did desire them to do it, and further that they did not tell her whether they were to use that charm or not, but they, viz. the mother and daughters, alleged their milk had no substance in it, and that she advised them to wash and plot their milk looms well, and being further interrogat whether Margaret M'Intaggart went into their house that Sabbath morning with milk in the egg shell, that she went to Alexander Fisher house, she says she did not that she knows of, if she did she saw her not.

The said Janet Campbell compeard, and being interrogat in the said manner that the said Margaret Crerar was, she declares *in omnibus* with her.

Ann Fletcher, spouse to the said Alexander Fisher, being calld compeard, and being interrogat as to Margaret M'In-

taggart going into her house upon the morning of the said Lord's Day, she declares that Margaret M'Intaggart came into her house early in the morning said Lord's Day the fifth of July last, and that she the declarant, from what she heard from some of her neighbours suspecting she came in with no good design, said to her, are you come my lass with the egg shell in the Devil's name, to which Margaret M'Intaggart answered that she was not, and that she had no egg shell, that then she, Anne, asked what she wanted so early, for she was not in use to come into her house, to which the other said, she came to ask her maid if she was going to church, that upon this the declarant answered that that was not her errand, and therefore if she came in in God's name she was welcome to stay as long as she pleased, but that in the Devil's name with the egg shell and the milk she desired her to be gone, that after some more words to this purpose Margaret M'Intaggart went out, and that she followed her quietly to the door and saw her open her breast and take out the egg shell with milk in it, that upon this she challenged her and went immediately and told her neighbours of it; calld Alexander Fisher being present declares that he was present all the while in his bed and heard what passd between them, and that his wife has told nothing but the truth.

The said Janet Campbell being further interrogate whether in the conversation she had in Gilbert M'Intaggart's house about this charm of the egg shell there was any word of going in the Devil's name with it, declares that when she told she heard of peoples going with the egg shell and milk in it to recover the substance of the milk taken away, Janet M'Intaggart, the said Margaret's sister, said, "Alas! it is not in the best name that people go with that," to which she returned, "I'll warrant it is not in the best name that people deal in such tricks," and both the M'Intaggarts agree that this was said. Parties being removed, and the Session considering the above affair and being dificulted how to behave in it, or what censure to inflict on the saids Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts, desire the minister to consult his brethern about it.

September 20th, 1747.
Session constitute at Lawers.

The minister reported that he talked to some of his brethern about the M'Intaggarts, and that they were of opinion they should be rebukd before the Congregation some several Sab-baths. The Session appoint Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts to be summond against this day eight days.

Kenmore, September 27th, 1747.

The said Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts compeard and were ordered to stand before the Congregation against this day eight days to be rebuk'd for their base practises.

Kenmore, October 4th, 1747.

Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts compeared before the Congregation and were rebuked and suitably exorted. The Session being constitute . . . Janet and Margaret M'Intaggarts compear'd again before the Session, and were examined and exorted and dismiss'd.

V.

Kenmore, July 1st, 1753.

It was represented to the Minr. and elders by Tawish M'Cawish, one of this number, that there was an affair of scandal in Shian that occasioned great disturbance in the neighbourhood. That about three years ago Donald Thomson, his wife, was charged with using charms, and that then he examined in yt affair and thought it so trifling as not to trouble the Session about it, and put an end to it himself. That this year about the first of May old style, Janet M'Nicol his present servant was said to have been practising some unbecoming things earlie of a morning, crossing back and fore

over a burn, and bowing herself to the ground, as if she was taking up something out of the ground, or putting something into it. That this gave offence to the neighbours that saw her doing it, and that upon their speaking of it, the said Jane M'Nicol, her master the said Donald Thomson and his wife, were offended at them, threatening to pursue them for scandal. At the same time compeared the said Donald Thomson and complained his wife Margaret Walker and said servant were scandalized, as if they had been using some unlawful charms : that some of his neighbours alledged his cows had too much milk, insinuating as if she used some diabolical act to get more than her own. Farther, that it was said her servant maid was practising some charms earlie upon Belton day this year, and as this story was spread throw the country to the great of his wife and servants' character and his own also, he prayed the Session to examine into it, and being asked who alledged such things, he told it was a general report throw the whole glen, and particularly Christian M'Ewen in Shian spoke to his wife about her charms, and her cows having too much milk, and that Janet Crearer said something of it to himself, and further, Tawish M'Cawish told that Christian Crerar, Catherine M'Ewan, Margaret Livingstown, and Janet Menzies in Shian were the proper persons to be examined on these matters. The Session orders all of them to be summoned before them against this day eight days.

Kenmore, July 8th [1753]

The Session constitute and having entered upon the affair relative to Donald Thomson's wife and servant, they being calld compeared. The said Christian M'Ewen being calld acknowledges that her own servant Cathrine M'Ewen having noticed Margaret Walker cutt some hairs out of her own cow's taill one night when she was milking in the ffold, and having taken offence at it as looking like a charm, she told this to the declarant, upon which the declarant went to the said Margaret and told that it was said among the neighbours that she was using some practises that gave offence, and told

her particularly about the hairs she had cutt, but refuses she had spoke anything to her about the milk. The said Catharine being calld comprd, declares that she saw said Margaret cutting three or four hairs out of her own cow's tail and putting them up carefully in a napkin about her neck and tying a know about it, and being surprised at this spoke of it to her mistress, asking what it could mean, and that her mistress said she never saw the like done and did not know what it meant.

Janet Crerar being calld declares, that once when some words passed between her and Donald Thomson, she told him she did not invy what he had nor was discontented with her own, nor did she hide nor conceal what she had, and thereby she meant to challenge his maid's concealing what milk she had in ye sheals which was laid always at the end of the bothich tyed up in a cloth till it was carried home.

The said Janet M'Nicol having compear'd denies that she was so much as near the burn on Belton day or the day before or after, and she never did cross the burn back and fore in any morning whatever. Christian Crearer, servant to Charles M'Cawish in Shian, a young woman aged about eighteen years, being solemnly sworn and purgd of malice and partial counsel, depones that one day about the first of May last old style, she happening to rise earlie in the morning about sun raising, she saw said Janet M'Nicol crossing a stripe or burn back and fore three times, going down the stripe or burn bowing herself as if she were putting something into the ground or taking something thence, and then she came to the first place she observed her at, viz. : at an ash bush, and that she had some few sticks in her hand, and that she went down upon her feet and hands, and then she went towards her master's house, and that Janet Menzies and Margt. Livingstown saw her also, but that was she the deponent that observed her first, and auquainted them of it, and depones that she did not go to her nor speak to her till the said Janet Menzies desired them *causa s'ccentie patet*, she declares she cannot write *sic subscribitur* John Douglass Modr.

Margaret Livingstown, an unmarried woman aged about 18 years, being solemnly sworn and purged of partial council, depones *in omnibus ut supra*, she cannot write *sic subscribitur* John Douglass, Modr.

The said Janet Menzies, a married woman aged about fifty years, being solemnly sworn and purged of partial council and malice, depones *in omnibus* with the preceding witnesses she cannot write *sic subscribitur* John Douglass, Modr.

Kenmore, September 16th, 1753.

The Session entering upon Margaret Walker and Janet M'Nicol their affair. They dismiss the said Margaret Walker with an exhortation to beware of using anything like charms in all time coming, and they order the said Janet M'Nicol to stand before the Congregation against this day fourteen days, and to be publickly rebuk'd for her indecent practices proven against her, and for her charging the witnesses who depon'd in her cause with perjury, and further order her to stand before the Congregation at Amulree against this day three weeks, and there to be rebuked for the same offences. The parties being call'd and this was intimate to them.

October 7th [1753].

The said Janet M'Nicol was rebuked before the Congregation according to appointment, for she not only desired (*denied*) the charge proven against her, but also prayed that God would inflict vengeance upon them who had brought so much trouble and shame upon her, for which imprecation she was call'd before the Session and rebuked. The Session in order to justify themselves to the Congregation appoint the depositions in her cause to be read from the pulpit against Sabbath next, and orders her to stand again before the Congregation for her insolence against this day eight days.

October 14th [1753].

The said Janet M'Nicol compeared and was rebuked (if possible) according to her demerit.

VI.

Kenmore, February 20th [1757]

Finlay M'Nab in Lawers compear'd, and complains that Duncan M'Inucatar in Croitantaoghan had scandaliz'd the said Finlay's son Donald M'Nab, and also Anne M'Inucatar in said Croitantaoghan, as if they had been using inchantments or charms to his detriment, and the said Duncan being present denies he had scandaliz'd the said Donald M'Nab, but acknowledges his suspecting the said Anne M'Inucatar practising some charms, and desires that her neighbours be call'd in and examin'd upon that head. The Session delay the consideration of this affair till Wednesday next, and appoint the parties to have in their witnesses against said day.

Kenmore, February 23rd [1757]

Parties compear'd, to wit, the said Finlay M'Nab and his son Donald, the said Anne M'Inucatar and said Duncan M'Inucatar. The said Donald M'Nab charged the said Duncan with having alleged that he, the said Donald, had done him hurt on the day of his marriage thro' the arts and inchantments of his grandmother, the sd Anne M'Inucatar. The said Duncan being interrogate acknowledges that he believes that some hurt was done him at that time, and that one day meeting with said Donald he asked him whether any of his friends to attend him on his marriage day, and further said to him that some hurt was done him, and tho' he did not believe him capable of doing it himself, yet he suspected that thro' the arts of his said grandmother he was the instrument of doing him harm. The said Duncan further declares, that he thought he had reason to suspect his grandmother's bad designs, as she was offended at the marriage he design'd with his present wife, and further, that he heard of her having us'd unwarrantable arts and inchantments formerly, particularly that about six years ago she was seen upon or about the first of May going towards the loch in the evening,

in a private and suspected manner, with her coat about her head, which created a suspicion in Patrick Dewar and Patrick M'Ilandick her neighbours who happened to see her, which made them go after her to know who it was; that upon this she went down into a hollow part; that they watched her coming; that as she returned from the loch upon observing them she went out of the straight road and hid a bottle she had in a curn of stones and then went home, upon which they went, took up the bottle and found some muddie water in it; that at this time it was grown dark, that one of them watched to see who would come and take up the bottle, and that under night a daughter of said Anne M'Inucatar came and carried it off.

The said Anne M'Inucatar acknowledges that she went with a bottle to the loch about the said time, but says it was in fair daylight when people were at work, but denies her having her coat about her head or her going down into a hollow place as represented; that she had only her gown tail about her shoulder, that she came up in fair daylight, that she laid the bottle down by the side of a stone, not wishing that people would see her for fear of suspicions, and sent her daughter afterwards to carry home the bottle, but denies that she hid or covered the bottle, and that it was fair daylight when she sent her daughter for the bottle, and that the bottle of water was clean, and the water was for washing a sick child which was in her house.

Patrick M'Ilandick in Croitantaoghan, aged about thirty years, being sworn and purg'd of malice or partial counsel, and interrogate, depones that he heard in the country that said Anne M'Inucatar in Croitantaoghan was suspected of practicing some enchantments and charms, and that she went under such a fame, that one night about six years ago the deponent and Patrick Dewar his then neighbour saw upon the evening of the first of May or the night before, a woman going towards the loch with her gown tail or coat about her head, which made them suspect that she was about no good design, upon which they went to watch her upcoming in order to know who it was; that when that woman returned from the loch, upon

observing them as the deponent thinks, she went aside out of the way towards a carn of stones; that she seemed to them as if she laid down something at said carn, and then she went towards the town; that at this time it was grown dark and that he did not know who it was; that after she was gone they went to the carn and there found a bottle with a stone upon the mouth of it; that he the deponent took up the bottle, and both he and said Patrick Dewar looked at it, found it if he rembers well about half full as if of water; that they did not know if there was any mixture because it was dark; that they left the bottle where it was and went home; that he, the deponent, after putting in and meating his horse went back towards the carn to watch who would come to carry off the bottle; and that he saw Elspeth Dewar, daughter to the said Anne M'Inucatar, come and carry of the bottle, and that now it was under night and bedtime. Further depones that the said Anne M'Inucatar was offended at said Duncan M'Inucatar for marrying his present wife, and being interrogate further depones that he would rather incurr the displeasure of any other woman in the neighbourhood than of said Anne M'Inucatar, not only as she was his Aunt, but as he feared she might do him hurt, and this is truth as he shall answer. *Sic subscribitur* Patrick M'Lentick.

Compear'd Patrick Dewar, late in Croftantaoghan, now in Craganester, aged about thirty years, sworn, purg'd of malice and partial counsel, and interrogate depones that he liv'd in Croftantaoghan and in that neighbourhood all his lifetime, and for many years in said Croftantaoghan, and that he never heard the said Anne M'Inucatar was suspected of using any inchantments excepting, that many years ago he heard that some milk cogues or dishes were burnt because they were made and practised for inchantments, and that one of these cogues did belong to said Anne M'Inucatar; further depones that one evening about the first of May six years ago, he alongs with Patrick M'Illandag, the preceeding deponent, saw a woman going towards the loch, and as she was coming back, stept aside towards a carn of stones; that upon this they went to

that carn suspecting that she laid down something there, and they found a bottle as he thinks as if full of water; that he, the deponent, did not discover if there was anything else than water, as it was late and dark; that the said Patrick M'Illandag who first found the bottle of water said there was a stone upon the mouth of it, and this is truth as he shall answer to God, and depones he cannot write. *Sic subscribitur* John Douglas, Modr.

The said Patrick M'Illandick, the first witness, being again interrogate with respect to said cogues, depones conform to the immediate preceeding witness, and adds that the said Anne told him that said bottle of water was on account of some loss of cattle she met with. *Sic subscribitur* Patrick M'Lentick.

Compear'd Finlay M'Kercher in Croftantaoghan, aged thirty years and upwards, being solemnly sworn, purged of malice and partial counsel, and interrogate depones that he heard said Anne M'Inucatar in Croftantaoghan suspected of some bad practices in way of charms and enchantments, particularly that about three years ago or thereby he heard that she and her daughter Elspeth had gone out in the night time when in the shealings and were going about the calf bothies, that this gave a great offence to the neighbours, as they suspected it was on no good design. Being further interrogate depones that she was a bold woman when provoked, and that he heard the neighbours say they would rather provoke any other than her, as they were afraid she could do them hurt through her bad arts. Further depones that he found the said Anne M'Inucatar offended at said Duncan M'Inucatar for marrying his present wife, further, that when said Duncan was craving some debt due to him by said Anne, he, the deponent, heard the said Anne M'Inucatar say he would get the debt, but wisht it might do him no good after getting the same, and this is truth as he shall answer to God, and depones he cannot write. *Sic subscribitur* John Douglas, Modr.

Compear'd John M'Illendaig in Croftantaoghan and Donald M'Aldonich in Druinnafearoch, and they being interrogate declare conform to the preceeding deponent as to said Anne

M'Inucatar's bad fame, and with respect to her being offended at said Duncan M'Inucatar's marrying his present wife, and as to the affair in the shealing, and of her having a bad tongue, and this is truth, and declare they cannot write.

[No further reference to this case is found in the Kirk Session Records.]



