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Tiry Mermaid

1813

Transcribed

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At Tiry House in the  
Island of Tiry the Eleventh  
day of August One thousand  
Eight hundred and thirteen  
Years

In presence of James Maxwell Esquire One of His Majestys Justices of the Peace for the county of Argyll.

Compeared<sup>1</sup> Colin Mac Niven Tacksman of Grianal<sup>2</sup> in the Island of Tiry who being solemnly sworn Depones<sup>3</sup> That one day in the beginning of Harvest about Eighteen Years ago two little Girls who had been walking about the Shores of his Farm which is situated on the Western extremity of Tiry came to him the Deponent and informed him that there was an human body cast upon the Beach. That a Brother of the Deponents having

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having been drowned a short time before this period he hastened to the shore to examine the Body. That he and some of his Servants who were alongst with him in the belief that it was an human body raised it from amongst the sand, and then perceived that down from the Middle it was formed like a Fish. That it was in a very putrid state, and having been tossed and chaffed amongst the Rocks and Sand the surface Skin was almost entirely rubbed off. That the upper part of the Body had a perfect resemblance to the human form. That the Head was about the size of that of a Lad of twelve or fourteen years of age, the features of the face very much resembling those of a Negroe; the Ears small and flat like the Human Ear. That the chin was short and projected but very little beyond the line of the Neck. Depones that the Arms appeared to be about fourteen Inches long formed in all respects

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<sup>1</sup> 'To appear in court as a party to a cause either in person or by counsel', <https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/compear>

<sup>2</sup> Greenhill, <https://www.tireeplacenames.org/greenhill/grianal/>. Tràigh Ghrianal is the small rocky beach at the south end of 'The Maze'

<sup>3</sup> 'To testify; to give evidence upon oath', <https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/depone>

Reference: Argyll Papers/PFV65/88, An Iodhlann 2021.53.88

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respects like the human Arm and ending in hands like the human hand with fingers and Nails like those of a Man except that the fingers were all joined together by a thin membrane. That its intestines were torn out and the Deponent could not observe where there had been any Sexual distinction. Depones that the extreme length of the animal appeared to him to have been fully five feet and from about the Middle downwards was formed like a Fish. That at the point where the human form ~~united~~<sup>descended</sup> in to that of a Fish there were two broad lateral fins, and that the tail was forked like that of a Mackarael [sic] but placed flat or horizontally. Depones that there was a small part of the Skin remaining entire near to the tail which resembled the Skin of a Porpoise and was perfectly free of hair. Depones that from the close resemblance which the Upper part of the animal bore to the

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the human form he the Deponent and his Servants did not like to see it exposed to injury or torn by Dogs and they therefore put it upon an hand barrow and carried it to a Sand bank where they dug an hole for it and buried [sic] it. ~~and~~<sup>That they</sup> raised an head and foot stone and threw some loose stones and Sand over it to protect ~~it~~<sup>the body</sup> and mark the place a Grave. Depones That a Grave in a Sand bank near to his the Deponents House which he has shewn to the Magistrate before whom this Deposition is emitted and which has been opened in his presence and in presence of his Son Doctor Niel Maxwell is the same in which the Deponent and his Servants deposited the body of the animal above described and that the Remains of a Skeleton found therein are its Remains all which is truth as he shall answer to God.

Collin McNiven

The above Deposition was emitted and the Grave therein mentioned was opened in presence of us.

Ja Maxwell J.P.  
Niel Maxell M.D.