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# INSCRIPTIONS AT ST. JOHN'S WELL, KILLONE ABBEY, COUNTY CLARE.

BY LORD WALTER FITZGERALD, M.R.I.A., FELLOW.

THE Abbey of Killone, which has recently come under the care of the Board of Works, is situated near Killone Lough, in the demesne of Newhall, the property of the Mac Donnell family. Between the abbey and the lough, picturesquely situated on the rocky shore, is the Blessed Well, called "Tobershawn," or St. John's Well, the Pattern at which takes place on the 24th of June.

The well itself is overshadowed by an ash-tree, to which is fixed an open cupboard, painted red, and full of statuettes in china, and plaster, of our Lord, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, besides little religious pictures, sets of beads, etc. On the opposite side of the tree are fastened up a stick and a couple of crutches.

A dry wall encloses the well, which is closed overhead with slabs of stone; a semicircular passage formed by another bit of wall leads to the entrance to the well, and the water is reached, low down in its rocky bed, by a few rough steps. Pins and buttons lie about, and bits of worsted-thread are tied to pins stuck into the bark of the ash-tree, but the usual votive rags are not visible here.

Leaning against the loose stones round the well is a small (eighteenth century) slab, on which is carved in relief the Crucifixion with an I.N.R.I. above, and a chalice at the sides; below, in incised letters, is cut the following:—

ERECTED TO THE GLORY  
OF GOD & IN HONOUR OF  
ST. JOHN.

A short distance from the well, is a low square enclosure with a muddy bottom; it is about 6 feet square, sunk in the ground and built of dry walls, which in its present condition hardly rise above the ground level, and externally are banked up with clay; a paved track leads from the well to this enclosure. I was not able to find out what it was formerly used for.

A short distance from the well is a large altar of loose stones, a couple of steps ascend to it; inserted in front of it is a big slab on which is inscribed:—



THIS ALTER WAS  
BUILT BY ANTHONY  
ROCH MERCHANT  
FROM ENNIS.  
1731.

On the top of the altar were a score of round or flat oval stones from the lough, which, I was told, were used by persons to keep count of the prayers repeated when making rounds.<sup>1</sup>

Among the loose rough stones of which the altar is built, I discovered two portions of a little inscribed slab; all that is now decipherable on it is:—

PATRICK SMI \*  
HAS BUILT THE  
KEEVE OF THIS  
HOLY WELL BY IT.  
\* MI \* \* \* \* A \* \* \*

the remainder of the slab is broken off and lost.

Near the well are the remains of another very small building in ruins. Owing to this interesting group of religious buildings being in a private demesne, I was unable, during my visit in July 1899, to meet any old people who might have given me information about it.

Killone lies about four miles to the south of Ennis.

I hope the short account of this spot may elicit from some of our county Clare members a fuller description of the remains round the well, and bring to light any local tradition or legend in connexion with them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 305, 306, *infra*, for a notice of round stones in the altars at Killeany, Kinallia, and Temple na neave, near Ross.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the convent of Killone, and a note on the well, see pp. 126, 133, *ante*.