

CURIOSITIES

Curious objects, structures, monuments, landmarks, sights, etc. For example, Wishing stones or "chairs," freaks of nature (i.e. grotesque rock formations)—in fact, any scene or object which may be regarded as queer, quaint or mirth-provoking. Location and description.

Any story or legend to be related.

St Brendan's Stone.— This object, a small black water rolled pebble 3" in diameter, smooth on all sides except where a chip has been broken out on one side, is in the possession of John K. Moran, Newport. It was found near St Brendan's Well described below many years ago. It is now kept in a small cloth bag. It is supposed to possess many cures for various diseases. When someone is sick the stone is sent for, and when brought to the house is placed in a small bowl of cold water. If after some time the water is found to have got warm it means the patient will certainly recover. He must then drink some of the water and the cure is rapidly effected. If the water remains cold there is no help for the patient and the relatives stand by and wait for his death!

There is a story told about how the chip was broken from its side. An English soldier was in a house to which the stone was brought in the hope of curing a dying man. When the soldier saw the stone being used he was so sceptical that he snatched it up and threw it into the heart of the open fire. Instantly the fragment of the stone flew out of the fire and struck the soldier over the temple and killed him instantly. ~~During~~ This is said to have happened in 1798. During a later troubled period, another sceptical soldier flung the stone into the Newport river where it sunk out of sight. Next day, however, it was found in its original position beside St Brendan's Well 4½ miles away! It has always been in the possession of the Moran family.

CUSTOMS, PATTERNS, ETC.

Brief account of old customs, traditional cures, etc., still practised in the district. Pilgrimages to Holy Wells, Shrines, etc. Patterns.

St Brendan's Well:— Situated on the coast in the townland of Rockfleet and 4 miles west of Berrishole Bridge. This was probably a very early church site. The name of the place, "Cillín," suggests a church tho' no trace of this now remains. The ancient church was contained within a circular stonewalled font like structure portions of which remain and which form the central feature of a graveyard. There are graves both inside and outside this enclosure. The wall of the enclosure is built without mortar and is of large rough blocks of limestone. In every way the structure resembles the typical stonewalled font. Outside the enclosure and to the east of it is an altar roughly built of unshaped stones. At the S.W. corner of it is a flat stone 2' x 1' x 9" in which are cut 3 hollows called bullauns. The centre one of these is 6" in diam. and 3" deep and is filled with offerings of old hair pins, metal washers buttons, pins etc. On the slab around the bullaun are 5 stones of peculiar shape. The ritual begins at this altar by making 7 circuits of it reciting Our Father's & Hail Marys. The path around the altar is 20 paces long. When 7 rounds are complete the pilgrim kneels before the bullaun stone and takes from it each of the five peculiarly shaped stones in turn and makes the sign of the cross on the altar stone and then on himself. The pilgrim then goes out of the graveyard to another square stone altar and makes 7 rounds about it after which he proceeds to the well to which access is given by three steps down. On reaching the last step he turns around 3 times and then looks at the water. The visit is then complete and if he sees a live fish in the well his petition is granted. The day for visiting this well is the 16th of May.

(Signed)

Michael J. O'Kelly, Surveyor.

DATE 28/9/42.