

## THE BLUE STONES OF OLD DAILLY

The ruined church at Old Dailly dates back to pre reformation times and was built on the site of an earlier structure dedicated to St Michael. Two large smooth blue / grey boulders lie within the walls of the old roofless church and are thought to be Charter Stones dating back to ancient times when such stones were granted to communities in lieu of written charters and one reference refers to Dailly as a 'Blue Stone Burgh'.

There are several traditions attached to the Old Dailly Blue Stones, one that in ancient times they were Sanctuary Stones and if wrongdoers, debtors in particular, placed their back against them they could not be apprehended.

Another tradition has it that when worship was discontinued at Old Dailly in 1695 when a new church was built at Milncavish, which later became New Dailly, the inhabitants of the new village insisted that the Charter Stone, the larger of the two, be removed from the old village to the new. The people of Old Dailly were unwilling to part with their ancient right and demands were made on both sides without effect.

In his historical notes to be found in Sir Walter Scott's 'Lord Of The Isles', he refers to the conflict in Dailly Parish and notes that it was settled ".....when man, woman and child from both communities marched out and by one desperate engagement put an end to the conflict". The populace of Old Dailly triumphed and both stones remained in the old churchyard.

Yet another tradition claims that the stones are possessed with mystical powers capable of bringing good fortune to those who touch them and in some cases they have the power to cure certain illness and give a feeling of well being.

The larger of the two stones weighs between 290 and 320 pounds and the smaller between 260 and 280 pounds in weight. Their smoothness and shape make them difficult for a person to grip and over the years they have become an attraction for those wishing to display their strength. In international stone lifting circles they come within the definition of 'lifting' or 'testing' stones and they refer to the larger of the two at Old Dailly as "The Big Blue".

Old Dailly Churchyard and it's surrounding burial ground was scheduled as an Ancient Monument in March 1999 and the Blue Stones, whatever their history or traditions, remain as an important part of the heritage of Dailly Parish and after many centuries have at last come under the care and protection of Historic Scotland and South Ayrshire Council who have done much work in bringing their importance to the attention of the general public.

On the advice and direction of Historic Scotland, in March 2001, South Ayrshire Council caused the free standing Blue Stones to be fixed to the wall of the church at ground level by use of steel bands in order to protect them and deter their removal.

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