

## The Story Behind the Stone (Alister Fraser, late 19th C.)

*[A memorial stone at Mauld by the south end of the bridge over the Glass at Struy bears the inscription: WC & CF 1746 Mo run geal og. It commemorates William Chisholm and his wife Christiana Ferguson.]*



“In central Strathglass at a point where the crossroad from Struy joins the Eskadale road, there stands a rough stone slab about six feet high with an inscription on it, which the passerby may not be able to make out, and if he does, he may not be much the wiser. I have known many local residents who had no idea why the stone was there. The locality where it stands in my young days was called Innis na Ceann, now it is known as Mauld Bridge. When I was a boy, and I am now approaching four score years, my father, the late James Fraser, Mauld, told me the story connected with this stone.

William Chisholm and his wife lived in a small cottage on the hillside above the farm buildings of Mid Crochail. Of this cottage there is no trace today. William, like many of the stalwarts of that time, decided to follow his chief to the field and he was also standard-bearer to the Chisholm of Chisholm. On the day he set out to join his clansmen his wife accompanied

him to Innis na Ceann and parted with her husband at the spot where the stone now stands. William proceeded on his way to the battle field, from which he never returned, and his wife went back to her cottage on the hillside with a heavy heart. In her grief she composed the song, “Mo Run Geal Og” (Cumha Uilliem Soisail). “My Fair Young Beloved” (A Lament for William Chisholm).

The stone itself originally came from Glen Affaric in this round-about way. My grandfather, Alexander Fraser, was tenant of the farm of Mauld and also tenant of the sheep farm of Beinn a Mheadhon, in Glen Affaric. He had noticed that the lintel over one of the doorways in the old steading at Mauld had cracked. In his frequent journeys up to Glen Affaric he spotted a large flagstone that would be most suitable as a replacement. It so happened that a mason of the name of Chisholm was in Strathglass on some work, and Fraser asked him to do the repair. The replacement stone was found to be too thick, so the mason took a slice off the side and a fine slab was left. Fraser wondered what he could do with this slab. Then the idea occurred to him. He had Chisholm cut the inscription referred to and erected the slab on its present site, in commemoration of the song and the parting which prompted its composition. Fraser, himself was a well-known local bard, and several of his songs are still on record. It would seem that he was well suited to try to preserve, in his small way, the record of a good song. He and his successors in direct line occupied the farm of Mauld for upwards of 120 years. Another account of William Chisholm’s wife, told me by an old relative long since passed on, was that she always hoped against fate that her husband might someday return, until one day long after the battle some tinkers came to her door. Among the garments they were wearing she recognised some of her own spinning and weaving, and was thereby convinced that there was no hope.”