XXXIV. *A Letter to GEORGE GODWIN, Esq. F.R.S., F.S.A. &c. &c. on the subject of Remains ascribed to the era of the Druids in Furness, north of Lancashire. By CHARLES M. JOPLING, Esq.*

Read 9th May, 1844.

29, Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square.

MY DEAR SIR,

SOME time ago I promised that I would draw up a short description of the antiquities of the part of Lancashire called Furness, which are commonly ascribed to the Druidical period. I do not consider that I have, by any means, fully investigated these remains; and I should have preferred the perfecting of my acquaintance with each, by careful investigation, did I not fear that the information already collected may, very possibly, together with my intention, be lost.

Within a strip of land, lying nearly north and south, about twenty miles in length, and three in breadth, are comprised the whole of the remains that have been noticed in Furness. This singular fact may be better understood by a reference to the annexed map.

The Cairns are distinguished thus ▲
The Stone Circles &c. ○

J. Basire sc.

Within this space we count five of those structures usually denominated temples; four or five large cairns; two large barrows, and several smaller ones; two camps; cromlechs; and stone hammers have been found in abundance. Sepulchres have also been discovered in the rocks, and some of the numerous beacons may perhaps be attributed to the period. All these are evidences that Furness must at one time have occupied an important position under the dispensation of the Druidical priesthood. The many names of local things and places, which are clearly of Celtic origin, and have so full a meaning in reference to the object to which they are attached, also speak of the race that once inhabited this region of lakes and streams, and of rich pasturage, so highly favourable for an early British settlement.

I will commence my description with a notice of "*Stone Walls.*"

These ruins are situated about a quarter of a mile eastward of the church of Urswick. The substratum of the site on which they are placed is the carboniferous or mountain limestone, and the country is plentifully strewn with boulders or water-worn fragments of the same rock, some of them being of gigantic dimensions.

Fig. I. Plate XVIII. is the partial inclosure of a natural terrace of rock, which juts out from the bottom of the valley. In the centre of this stands the cromlech A.

Fig. II. This wheel-like construction is upon a much more elevated terrace than Fig. I., and about a quarter of a mile south of it. The encompassing wall is nearly ten feet thick, and formed by the outer stones (which are long,) being placed endways into the ground, with smaller stones filled in between.

The inclosure is 350 feet in diameter, at its longest axis, and 315 at its

A.

Cromlech

B.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

shortest. In the centre is a small circle like the nave of a wheel; and from the larger circle towards the centre long arms branch out, suggesting the idea of a chariot wheel.

Fig. III., is an irregular four-sided figure, nearly approaching to a square of 215 feet. From the circumstance that a wood occupies the greater part of its site, it is somewhat difficult to trace. In the centre a quarry has been worked.

At B is another cromlech.

The walls which inclose Figs. II. and III. were stated to have been of considerable height about thirty years ago: but they have since that time been taken down, in order to construct fences with the materials.

Fig. IV. Plate XVIII. "Sunbrick circles" are situated about two miles eastward of Figs. I., II., III. upon the brow of a hill called Birkrigg, overlooking the village of Bradsea, and the bay of Morecambe. In the smaller circle there are twelve stones. The exact number in the outer ring is uncertain, perhaps 19 or 20. The larger circle is 90 feet, and the smaller 30 feet, in diameter.

On the same hill occurs "Appleby Slack," Fig. X. (see Plate XIX.) which has been conjectured to have been a British camp. Within a short distance there is another work of a similar kind.

Fig. V., called "The Kirk," is a circle of 75 feet in diameter, formed by raising a bank of earth and stones. Not many years ago the large stones which stood in a row upon the bank were removed for building materials. The inside of the circle is quite level.

It is somewhat singular, with regard to this circle, that its original appropriation is still recorded by tradition, "that it was a place where their forefathers worshipped:" the name is curious, "The Kirk:" near it is a wet boggy place, called "Kirk Sinkings."

In later times, upon the afternoon of every Easter Monday, the lord of the manor of Kirkby resorted to the circle, where all his tenants met him, and games of wrestling, dancing, hurling, and leaping ensued. The last lord who attended broke his thigh in one of the games, and from that time it was discontinued.

The following sketch will show better than any written description the relative position of the circle and the cairn, Fig. VI.

Fig. VI. is a cairn of 90 feet in diameter, near the centre of which I had an excavation made, and discovered a tomb.

Fig. VII. This cairn is two or three hundred yards from the circle Fig. V. In the tomb a few pieces of calcined bone were found.

Fig. VIII. shows the method adopted for placing the stones together. The stone chest was covered with a very heavy stone, upwards of a ton in weight.

Besides the cairn on Kirkby-moor there are others on Heathwaite, Woodland, Blawithknott, and Broughton-moor.

There is a tradition connected with the cairn on Broughton-moor, which was related to me by an old man, aged 86, who had taken a great delight in searching for such things, and who informed me also of the existence of a rocking stone upon his estate, not very far distant from the cairn. The tradition was this:—That the devil had contracted with a certain king of the north country, to build a bridge over one of the lakes. For this purpose he put on a leathern apron, and went into the adjoining valley of the Dudden River to procure the necessary materials,

which as he gathered he put into his apron. Having got one good load he essayed to return, and had crossed the highest part of the hill and descended partly into the valley, when the apron strings broke and the stones fell in a heap at his feet. From not being able to replace the strings, or from some other cause, he then threw up the contract. This tradition shows how entirely the original appropriation of the cairn is lost, contrary to the former instance, where a correct idea of the former use was retained.

Fig. IX. (Plate XIX.) The Moat, or Moat-hill, is a mound of earth nearly 30 feet in height, raised upon the edge of a steep declivity on the shores of the bay of Morecambe. Of its first intent, or subsequent use, little can be gathered; but from the name it seems very possible that it was converted by the Saxon lord, in after years, into his moot-hill.

On the small map will be observed some marks which show the position of barrows or tumuli, at Pennington, Mountharrow, and Heathwaite. That at Pennington is of considerable size. It is situated in a field called Ella-barrow, and the mound itself is called Conninger, or Connisher. The two small barrows on Heathwaite are close to two small stone circles, called "Giants' Graves," which on being excavated about two years ago were found to contain the bones of men, covered by a flat stone. In one the fragment of a stone ring was found, about a couple of inches in diameter.

There is a tradition amongst the old inhabitants that giants formerly lived at the place and were buried there. The last of the race is said to have been shot with an arrow upon the adjacent hill of Blawithknott.

a, b, c are some specimens of stone hammers, or celts, that have been found in Furness; *a* and *b* have perforations for the admission of handles, but *c* had probably been used with a withy handle.

It was found upon the site of a small ruin at High-haum, together with a number of others ; they were in different stages of manufacture ; some being only in form, others finely polished.

I have purposely abstained from any comment as to the signification or appropriation of the several remains which I have endeavoured to describe very briefly, as I know that there are so many in your Society who are so much better acquainted with the subject than I happen to be.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours, very truly,

CHARLES M. JOPLING.

GEORGE GODWIN, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A., &c.