V. *An account of a remarkable Monument, in Penrith Church Yard, Cumberland. By Dr. Lyttelton, then Dean of Exeter.*

Read at the Society of Antiquaries, Feb. 5, 1756.

GENTLEMEN,

IN a tour I made the last summer, over part of the north of England, I met with a remarkable Monument in Penrith Church-yard, in Cumberland, an elevation of which I now do myself the pleasure of laying before you, it having never been yet engraved, or, indeed accurately described by any author. It is called the *Giants Grave*; and we have the following account of it in Bishop Gibson's edition of the *Britannia* (Vol. II. p. 1020) communicated to him (as I was informed) by Dr. Todd, of Carlisle.

“ In the Church-yard, at Penrith, are erected two large pillars of about four yards in height each, and about five yards distant one from the other. It is said, that they were set up in memory of one Sir Owen Caefarius, knt. who lived in these parts, and killed wild boars in the forest of Ingelwood, which much infested the country. He was buried here, they say, and was of such prodigious stature, as to reach from one pillar to the other; and they tell you, that the rude figures of boars, which are in stone, and erected two on each side of his grave, between the pillars, are in memory of his great exploits upon these creatures.”

THIS idle tale, which I found still universally credited by the vulgar inhabitants of Penrith, seems to have no other foundation than the unusual length of the grave, and some very rude carving on
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the front of those stones, which in the foregoing account are described as figures of boars, and erected two on each side the grave; whereas they are circular segments of stone about four feet in height, and six in length, enclosing a narrower space of ground than is usually taken up by a common grave. So far therefore are these stones from representing the figure of a boar, that it requires a pretty strong imagination to discover any regular figure in the rude sculpture which remains upon them [a].

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[a] Mr. Pennant, at the end of his Tour in Scotland, has published an account of these pillars, with two views of them; one similar to this the other different from the present appearance of the columns, which I visited last September. Dr. Stukeley (Itin. II. p. 46.) says they had rude carvings and *letters* seemingly *Runic*. The oldest of Mr. Pennant's drawings makes their shafts square, with transverse pieces, forming a perfect cross, and a human head carved on the inside, just below the center of the cross. Not the least traces of the head remain at present, and scarce any of the transverses: but though these may have been destroyed by time, it is not conceivable, that any man since that time, as Mr. Pennant observes, would have taken the pains to chip these pillars from a round shape, to one half round, half square. The greatest difficulty seems to be about the boars, said to be carved on the four semicircular stones below. From Dr. Todd's description one would suppose he meant that these stones were *cut in the form* of boars, instead of being charged with reliefs of those animals. His words, as cited by Mr. Pennant from his MS. collections, are, "The space between the pillars is surrounded with the *rude figures of four boars, or wild hogs.*" Bishop Lyttelton says, "it requires a strong imagination to discover any regular figure in the rude sculptures on them." See Mr. Pennant's Tour 1769, 4to. p. 253. Some rude figures, not unlike those on the Danish obelisks in Scotland, presented themselves to my imagination, on the outer face of the north west stone, particularly two figures like men at bottom. The inner face of all these four stones are hatched with a chisel; as is common in hewn stones. They have lost much of the neatness given them in this plate, and the south-western stone is almost broken away. They all originally measured two feet in height, but were of different lengths.

Dr. Todd supposes these pillars were intended to place corpses on, at the north or *Death's* door of the church, while prayers were offered for their souls. But the height of these pillars is against this supposition, even if we were sure of this ceremony or custom. The name of *grave* given to this monument by uniform tradition, plainly assigns its intention, though it may not be easy to trace the person buried under it. The distance of the stones only proves him to have been a person of

Ancient Monuments in Penrith Church Yard.

W. B. J.

IN the same church-yard, at about thirteen yards distance from this monument, is a single pillar, called *the Giants Thumb*, which Dr. Todd does not even mention in the above description, but it is represented in the drawing now before you. What relation or connection this pillar has with the others, called the Giants Grave, I will not pretend to determine; but from the shape of the upper part, I cannot think it to be the *epistyle of an ancient cross*, as has been conjectured by some learned persons in that neighbourhood [b]. Whatever therefore this pillar may be, the Giants Grave is undoubtedly a sepulchral monument; but whether British, Roman, Saxon, or Danish, is the question.

THAT it is much too rude to be a work of the Romans is evident; and with regard to the Saxons, I know of no monument, of this kind, remaining in England, which was ever attributed to those people. It must then be either British or Danish. Now the Britains, it is well known, maintained their ground in these parts for a considerable time after the Saxons were in possession of the rest of England, and gave British names both to this county, and the place where this monument stands. The circular entrenchment, called *Arthur's round Table* [c], about half a mile south eminence or distinction, as barrows are well known to exceed the proportions of the body deposited under them. Perhaps this grave might contain several bodies, and be a memorial of some battle, lost in the darkness of history. R. GUGH.

[b] The *Giants Thumb*, a single stone, at the north west end of the church-yard, has nothing to do with the other monument, but is plainly an ancient cross, whose base is sunk into the earth. It is six feet high, 14 inches broad at bottom, contracting to ten inches upwards, and the circle of the cross 18 inches in diameter. A cross of one stone seven feet high, somewhat like it, stands on steps in Longtown church-yard, in this county. Penrith church has, within these few years, been intirely rebuilt of brick, except the tower, which is of stone. The Giants Grave, being very near the church, may have been damaged at this time by the workmen. R. G.

[c] This earthwork is 150 feet diameter, with two entrances on the north and south. It has suffered a little by being used as a cockpit; and the other earthwork, which is contiguous to it on the north, is almost defaced by buildings. R. G.

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of Penrith (described in Gibson's edition of the Eritannia, p. 998.), and a large stone circle with a barrow in the center [*d*], about the like distance north of Penrith, on the Fell above the town, mentioned by none of our writers; likewise the Druid temple at Little Salkeld near Penrith, called *Long Meg and her Daughters*; are all, or at least the two last, undoubted remains of the Britains here; but if our monument be British, it is of much later date, than either the stone circle, or Druid Temple, being probably erected to the memory of some British prince, or chief, after Christianity was established among them: and this I infer, from its being situated in the church-yard, and from the rude representation of a cross, which appears towards the summit of one of the pillars. It being denominated the *Giants Grave*, is perhaps a circumstance which strengthens the opinion of the monument being British; for our best writers on antiquity have observed, that, both in England and Ireland, the vulgar ascribe every stupendous and very ancient work of their British ancestors to Giants; thus Stonehenge is called *Chorea Gigantum*, or the *Giants dance*, by the old Monkish writers. The vast fortification, called *Pen-y-Gair*, at Llanderfell in Merionethshire, is said by the neighbouring inhabitants to have been made by Giants; and the like fabulous tradition occurs in many other places. But after all, this monument may perhaps be Danish, as the late learned Bishop Nicolson has proved that to be in Beaucaſtle church-yard in this county [*e*], as is the stone cross in Eyam church-yard in the county of Derby, which I formerly gave an account of to this learned Society. Dr. Plot, in his Natural History of Staffordshire (Pl. xxxiii.) has given an engraving of a remarkable sepulchral monument of this kind at Checkley, in that

[*d*] This barrow is called *Ormſtead-hill*, and ſurrounded by a circle of ſhort ſtones. R. G.

[*e*] Gibson's edition of the Britannia, p. 1029.

county, consisting of three upright pillars, about four feet high (if I mistake not), two of which have a good deal of rude sculpture upon them, as the third probably had; but I was informed several years since by an ancient inhabitant of the place, that the present plain pillar was placed there in the room of one of the old ones, thrown down and broke by accident. The Doctor conjectures, that this monument was erected by the Danes, from its similitude to that at Beaucaſtle in Cumberland before mentioned; and to many of the like fort deſcribed by Olaus Wormius, in his fifth and fixth book of the *Monumenta Danica*. But I muſt obſerve, that the carving on the pillars, at Checkley and Beaucaſtle, though rude enough, yet is much leſs ſo than the monument under conſideration.

IF the caſtle of Penrith was repaired out of the ruins of *Mayburgh* (or *Mayborough*) a neighbouring Daniſh temple, as biſhop Gibſon aſſerts it to be, though Camden ſtyles it a Roman fort [*f*], it is the more likely that other Daniſh antiquities ſhould be found at Penrith; but as Dr. Gibſon aſſigns no reaſon for ſuppoſing Maybury to be Daniſh rather than Roman, much ſtreſs cannot be laid upon this circumſtance.

IN opening a gravel pit lately on the ſide of a hill, in the pariſh of Stanwix, juſt without the ſuburbs of Carlisle, a ſtratum of bones were diſcovered, at about a yard below the ſurface, lying about a foot thick in moſt parts, and ſtretching the whole length of the pit, which I apprehend to be near twenty feet. I examined the ſpot, and found divers fragments of Roman pottery

[*f*] *Maburgh* is a large circular area, encloded with a bank of flints. In its center flood three or four large, irregular ſhaped ſingle ſtones, of which only one remains at preſent. If biſhop Nicolſon had not corrected Camden, in his account that Penrith caſtle was repaired out of the ruins of this place, which exactly reſembles the Druidical places of worſhip, a bare view of the caſtle would do it; Penrith caſtle being intirely built of red hewn ſtone. R. G.

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ware [g] intermixed with the bones. They are, I think, the bones of horses, and might perhaps have been buried after an engagement between the Romans and Picts; but it is not so easy to account for the fragments of paterae, &c. which are found in great numbers intermixed with them.

N. B. The Picts wall ran within less than half a mile of the spot where these bones were found.

I am, GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

Dec. 18, 1755.

C. LYTTELTON.

[g] Some elegant specimens of which, with some of the bones, were exhibited.